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159.





DILEMMAS OF PRIDE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF FIRST LOVE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

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—
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159.





man who had been born in the family, and grown grey in its service, playing, with the most extravagant demonstrations of delight, on a rude harp, that instrument so surrounded with poetic associations; seated too beneath a spreading cedar, the trunk and undermost branches of which, together with his countenance and white hair, were strongly illuminated by an adjacent heap of blazing pine,—all gave to Arden Park a demesne of such unlimited magnificence, that it formed in itself a sort of sylvan empire, a powerful resemblance, at the moment of which we speak, to what our imaginations are prone to figure of the feasts of *Shells*, as described by that poet of ancient bards and burning oaks, the venerable Ossian.

On an abrupt and rocky eminence, at some distance, but still within the park, stood the picturesque remains of Arden Castle, once the

were just visible, breaking the dark line formed by seemingly interminable woods.

The modern house, a magnificent structure, standing on a commanding eminence, the approach to which was gradual in the midst of a park and woodlands comprising above thirty thousand acres, now poured from every door and window streams of cheerful light.

Figures were discernible within, some moving in the merry dance, others thronging to and from halls dedicated to hospitable cheer.

We have already said it was near midnight : the day had been spent in festivities, held to celebrate the coming of age of Sir Willoughby Arden, now (his father having been sometime dead,) the head of the ancient family to whom the property belonged.

The rejoicings, not only those going forward beneath the sheltering roof of the mansion but

upon all : the music ceased, the voices of revelry were hushed, and that peculiar stillness prevailed which seemed to indicate that every individual in the crowd was occupied in counting the solemn chimes. The nearest and loudest bell took the lead, and was quite distinct from the rest, while the others followed, like answering echoes, in the distance. A second after the number twelve was completed, one universal shout rent the air ! The health of Alfred Arden was drank within the mansion, and arms might be seen waving above the heads of the guests: after which, Sir Willoughby, leading his brother forward, issued from the open door, and stood on the centre of the steps.

Servants held up lighted flambeaux on either side, and the old butler, with hair as white as the harper's, presented a goblet of wine. Sir Willoughby announced his brother with enthu-

In marrying the late Sir Alfred, the then head of the family, in obedience to the wishes of her parents, she had sacrificed an early attachment to his youngest brother.

Sir Alfred had, however, proved a very polite husband, and she had for years been the mistress, nay, the very princess of a princely mansion, a splendid establishment, and a magnificent demesne; she had possessed every luxury that art and wealth could procure, and at the same time had been surrounded by all the beauties of nature on the most extensive scale.

All had now passed away! It was to her son, 'tis true, and he was dutiful and affectionate, and would always, she had no doubt, make her welcome, but of course as a visiter; and whenever her son should marry (which she certainly wished him to do), a stranger would be mistress of all; and to the courtesy of that stranger she

whenever she should die, if they were not married, lose many more; nay, be probably reduced, at last, by the insufficiency of their portions as younger children, to the state of poor aunt Dorothea, whom she had herself often held up to them as a warning of the miseries attendant on remaining single.

Aunt Dorothea's afflictions were not always of the tragic order, and the remembrance of some of them called up, at the moment, despite her solemn reflections, a faint smile on the countenance of Lady Arden; followed, however, by a sigh, for the subject now came home to her feelings in a manner it had never done before.

So absorbing had been her reflections, that she had not noticed the gathering clouds which had gradually extinguished every star, and darkened the heavens, till all on which she still looked out had become one black and formless

saddened feelings, while the castle, crowning its rocky site, as already described, floated before her eyes, even after their lids were closed ; and when she slept, the vision still blended with her dreams, as did the forms of the Baron and his two sons, described in the legend of the castle, and all strangely mixed up with the festivities of the previous day, and the forms of her own happy blooming family.

The legend alluded to, and which had given rise to the superstition we have mentioned, ran thus.

Some centuries ago, the Baron had two sons, who, when boys, had climbed, one day, during a fearful thunder storm to the topmost turret of the castle, which was at the time enveloped in clouds

When, however, the storm was over, their bodies were found, locked in each other's arms,

laying it at the top of the wall in
which the said stone lay. The said Brown said
of said stone that it was a discolor re-
lative, which he thought ~~had~~ had followed
the youths down ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ ~~and~~ stone going
at the stone had ~~gradually~~ ~~gradually~~ drawn the coping-
stone from between them ~~and~~ others maintained
the only grounds for the said suspicion to be,
that the said stone was ~~certainly~~ found on the
inner side the parapet, while the bodies of the
youths lay below.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN Lady Arden arose in the morning all was calm and sunshine.

The storm of the night might have seemed a dream but for the still visible traces of its ravages. The river was greatly swollen, and several of the largest and finest of a range of magnificent old trees which had grown on the brow of a sloping bank, forming a beautiful feature in the landscape, now lay on the ground, literally uprooted by the violence of the tempest. Their fate, however, was soon forgotten in that of two young oaks, which had been

the same object, issued one by one, from the open glass door of the breakfast room, and gathered round the spot; each looked playfully dismal for a moment, and the next uttered some laughing remark. They were soon joined by their mother; and the group would have formed a striking family picture. Lady Arden was still a very fine woman: from her mild temper the sweetness of her countenance was yet unimpaired, while the expression of maternal tenderness,—and this from the late tenor of her thoughts was unconsciously mingled with something of solicitude,—with which she viewed her children, her sons now especially, and Alfred in particular, her favourite son, gave additional interest to her appearance.

Alfred's sparkling eye and blooming cheek did not, however, seem to justify much anxiety on his account; his brother too, though he had

quired the habit of calling him Sir Geoffery ; and at college his companions, particularly those who wished to flatter him into idle extravagance, constantly joked and complimented him about his great *expectations*. Thus had those expectations, unjustly founded as they were, grown with his growth and strengthened with his strength ; till, when his uncle did marry, he could scarcely help thinking himself an injured, robbed, and very ill-treated person. Hope however revived a little, on the first three children chancing to be daughters, and his mother began again to say, he might have the Arden estates yet :—stranger things had happened. “ And you might marry one of the girls, you know, Geoffery,” she would continue,—“ it would be some compensation to poor Sir Alfred for having no son.”

“ Indeed I should do no such thing,” he

enjoyed it. Now he must go and drudge at a profession, the very idea of which, after his imagination had been so long dazzled by false hopes, he absolutely loathed.

He had been educated for the Bar, but had neglected his studies. He had been dissipated without gaiety of heart, and a gambler from avarice. His hopes had made him proud, while his fears had made him gloomy. In short, he had contrived to extract the evil from every thing, while he had avoided all that was good. As to his legal studies, he had never read any portion with interest or attention but the law of male entail.

He was a bachelor, and likely to remain such: for he could not afford to marry, unless he obtained a much larger fortune than he was entitled to expect.

There was nothing he could exactly dare to

do to injure his cousins; but he hated them both, and kept an evil eye upon them. As for his female cousins, he did not take the trouble of actively hating them, he merely despised them as beings shut out from all possibility of inheriting the property. Beautiful and high born as they were, he would not have accepted the hand of any one of them had it been offered to him.

Sir Willoughby was goodnaturedly weak, and very vain;—his was a vanity however which, when it happened to be gratified, made him extremely happy, by keeping him in the highest good humour with himself. From him Geoffry won large sums at bilhards, by flattering him on his play, 'till he induced him to give him, habitually, such odds as amounted, in point of fact, to giving him the game, or, in other words, the sum staked upon it.

Lady Arden often endeavoured to dissuade her son from acquiring so bad a habit as that of gambling, but in vain ; for Willoughby, like all weak men, was obstinate to excess : he had besides a marvellous respect for the salique law, and that jealousy of being guided, which unhappily always forms a leading feature in the characters of those who stand most in need of guidance. Yet he was fondly attached to his mother ; his greatest delight was to devise something for her pleasure or her accommodation ; he was always ready to make her munificent presents ; in short, he would do any thing to oblige her, with the exception of following her suggestions.

Not that he always ungraciously refused requests that contained in them nothing prohibitory ; he had no particular objection sometimes to do a thing he was asked to do ; but a thing he was asked not to do, he was always sure to

too, men who had bought their experience dearly enough and who were surprised into involuntary admiration of so young a person, who seemed to have his intuitively.

His brother loved him in the most enthusiastic manner ; more than he did his mother, or any one else in the world ; yet, strange to say, such was Willoughby's dread of being governed, that even the brother whom he loved so much, had not the slightest influence over him ; nay, Alfred was afraid to use persuasion of any kind, least it should have a contrary effect ; and yet, if he ever let it appear that he was in the slightest degree hurt or offended by this unmeaning and dogged obstinacy on the part of his brother, Willoughby's despair would sometimes, though but for a moment or two, manifest itself in a way perfectly terrifying ; he would rush towards a window, or a river side, and threaten to fling

CHAPTER III.

WHILE the Arden family are on their way to town, we shall take a peep at the High-street in Cheltenham. Strings of carriages were driving backward and forward, from turnpike to turnpike, while the open barouches, filled with bonnets of every colour in the rainbow, flaunting and waving to and fro, looked like so many moving beds of full blown tulips. Foot-passengers too of all classes thronged the flagways.

Among these was distinguishable a tall, large, and still handsome woman, apparently upwards

to these lodgings, as being *superiorly* furnished, a great preference over their competitors. In the centre of the room stood a table covered with a very dingy green baize, and round the walls were ranged some half dozen small mock rosewood chairs, accommodated with little square inclined planes, covered with pink calico, and called cushions. Either for want of strings at the back, or in consequence of such strings being out of repair, these said inclined planes, whenever you attempted to help yourself or any one else to a chair, flew off, either into the middle of the floor, or if it was the fire you had wished to approach, perchance under the grate. Over the mantelpiece was placed what the landlady considered *a very handsome* chimney-glass, *a foot and half* high, and about three wide; its gilt frame carefully covered with transparent

sure," answered Mrs. Dorothea, "so long as it lasts; but she has promised faithfully, that as soon as the sick lady goes away, which will be in about a week, she will let me have the sofa out of the next drawing-room."

"A bird in the hand's worth two in the bush!" replied Sarah. "I dare say if the truth was known, they're not worth a sofa; or, if they are, they'll keep it in the next room, when it is vacant, to be a decoy-duck to another lodger. They're not going to let you have it, I promise you, now that they have got you fast for a month certain."

"Well, if they don't, I can't help it," said Mrs. Dorothea; "one can't have every thing you know; and the new carpet certainly gives the room a very respectable appearance. And then there is a chiffonier; that's a great comfort to put one's groceries in; or a few biscuits; or a

should never be able to stop. When the dinner was asked for, she replied, that she believed it had been done some time, but that she supposed there was no one to bring it up, for all they had engaged to do the waiting. "But there's sixteen of themselves, shop boys and all; and they gets their own tea the while your dinner's a cooking it seems."

When the dinner did come up, it was cold, and consisted of mutton-chops, which had evidently been upset into the ashes. Poor Aunt Dorothea consequently made but a slender repast.

The next day, while engaged in the labours of the toilet, she thus addressed Sarah; for people who live quite alone, are too apt to get into a way of gossiping with their servants.

"It's a very long time since the Salters have called; is it not, Sarah?"

lar a request of my friends that they would call on them, that I quite laid myself under obligations to people. They could find out my lodgings fast enough, when they were coming to my little sociable parties five nights out of the seven ; declaring they did not know what was to become of them, were it not for my kindness ; and that the more they saw how differently others behaved to them, the more were they obliged to me ; and then making such a vulgar noise about the number of invitations they were in my debt and their grief at not having it in their power as yet to make any return."

" Then I can tell you ma'am," said Sarah, " they are to have a grand party this very night at the rooms, and never had the manners to ask you."

"Well to be sure!" exclaimed the abigail,
"and then they are to have Sir Henry and Lady
Shawbridge."

"Sir Henry, poor man," said Mrs. Dorothea,
"was only knighted by mistake. I don't know
what he was himself, but they say he had just
married his cook-maid; and her ladyship cer-
tainly has all the fiery-faced fierceness of that
order about her."

"A cook-maid, ma'am! why I am a step
above that myself. And let me see, who else—
oh, there's to be Lady Flamborough."

"She is a woman of rank certainly, or rather
the widow of a man of rank; for she is of very
low birth herself; and what is much worse, she
is a woman of bad character, which of course
prevents her being visited, so that she is glad to
go any where. And who else pray?"

all the sins he may commit abroad, although she should be praying for his conversion the whole time. Well, who comes next on your list?"

"I don't think as I remember any more, excepting General Powel."

"He, poor old man, is mere lumber; neither useful nor ornamental, nobody will be troubled with him who can get anybody else to fill up their rooms; so that I should suppose he is not incumbered with many invitations."

"Well who would a thought of their being such a *despisable* set; and so many titles among them too; why to have heard Mrs. Johnson talk o' them, you'd supposed they had been so many kings and queens."

"It was a set I should not have joined certainly; but quite good enough for the Salters, whom I should never have visited, had the friend

impertinence to me, I for one shall make no secret of the circumstance. And the very young men that eat Mr. Salter's roast beef now, washed down too with his champaign and his claret, will not be the less ready to jeer at the time he sold the same commodity raw. When my sister, Lady Arden, comes, and her three beautiful daughters, they will of course have all the young men in Cheltenham about them ; so that I shall be acquainted with them all ; and I shall take care they shall not be in the dark about the Misses Salter, who shall find that I am not to be insulted with impunity."

" And I shall have some fun with our butcher about it," said Sarah ; " I shall tell him to be particular what sort of meat he sends to such a good judge as Mr. Salter. Perhaps you could spare me for a couple of hours this evening,

me a full account of every thing. And notice if there is any body there that I know—and how the people are dressed—and how often the refreshment trays come in—and whether they attempt a supper—and who begins the dancing. The Miss Salters will get partners for once in their lives, I suppose ! And I dare say they will contrive to have a tolerably full room ; for I hear they have been getting all their acquaintance to give away cards, right and left ; Lady Matthias alone boasts that she has disposed of three dozen."

“ Sarah promised strict compliance with all the directions she had received, and disappeared in great haste, to pin new bows in her bonnet, and slip stiffeners into the large sleeves of her best silk dress ; determining to complete her costume for the occasion, by lending herself her

scorn, of comfort and respectability cast away, for dreams of ambition it had never been her fate to realize.

She paused, and some seconds were given to a remembrance apart from every other, which, though now but faintly seen amid the haze of distance, still seemed a little illumined speck, on which a sunbeam, piercing some aperture in a cloudy sky had chanced to fall.

But it was too late, quite too late for such thoughts, so she went out to pay some morning visits, to send in a veal cutlet for her dinner, and find out, more particularly, who were to be at the Salter's party.

"What can all the people be thinking of?" said Mr. Salter at last; "I have a mind to order the lights to be put out, and go away home to my bed. It would be just a proper punishment for them all. And pray," he added, looking at his daughters' dresses, "what are these gimmeries to cost?" At this crisis resounded the welcome sounds, "Sir Matthias and Lady Whaleworthy:" with quickened steps and delighted countenances, our trio hastened towards the bottom of the room, to receive their guests, now, as by magic, flowing in altogether.

Introductions were endless; every leading bird was followed by a flock, which neither host nor hostess had ever seen before; while, from time to time, the promised titles, those stars which were to give brilliancy to the night, made their appearance, sprinkling the common herd

stock of the whole room, it was with difficulty that even his fifteen thousand per annum could procure him a partner.

We rather suspect, however, that there were ladies who, though they shrank from sharing with Sir James the unprofitable ridicule of the hour, would have had no objection to share with him for life his fifteen thousand a-year, for, in that case, they could afford to be laughed at.

Sir James had a brother, a very fine young man, remarkably handsome and equally clever; perhaps a little too hot-headed, but warm-hearted withal; an enthusiast in beauty, painting, music, scenery, every thing in short at which a glowing imagination takes fire; the very material for a frantic lover, yet condemned by his circumstances, either to lead

while Henry, with the pittance which as a younger child was his portion, was obliged to purchase the privilege of being shot at; for the younger brother of an old baronet *could not disgrace his family* by doing any thing likely to provide *comfortably for himself*.

Thus do the *prejudices* of society seem to have been invented for the express purpose of hunting down and crushing those whom its laws have robbed and oppressed.

Children of the same parents must be defrauded of the birthright, by natural justice theirs, to heap all on one brother! And for what purpose? That he may keep alive, by being its living representative, that *pride*, that *curse*, which forbids to those so defrauded, the use of honest means for earning honest bread!

If, instead of this, all property which had

that it was thought advisable to commence dancing. For this purpose Mr. Salter, with a feeling of exultation which made him forget, for the time, what the whole entertainment was likely to cost, led Lady Flamborough to the head of the room. Her ladyship had evidently been pretty in her youth; but though the remains of a fine woman may sometimes be viewed with a blending of admiration with our veneration, mere prettiness seldom grows old gracefully. In Lady Flamborough's case it certainly did not. Her once nicely rounded little figure had now outgrown all bounds, not excepting those of the drapery which ought to have concealed its exuberance. Her once infantine features were now nearly lost in the midst of a countenance disproportionately increased in its general dimensions; while in manner she still

tiveness, and all that called itself face, concluded without any distinct line of demarcation, in a jole, much resembling that of a cod-fish.

The eyes were colourless, and owed all the brilliancy they possessed to an inflammation of the lids, which never forsook them. The efforts of their owner, on the present occasion, to give them a languishing roll, that should correspond with that of her ladyship's, was truly ludicrous. As to his mouth, it bisected his countenance from ear to ear, which rendered his endeavours to spread it wider by that bland movement designated a smile, nearly abortive.

A few additional lines of circular or spherical trigonometry were conspicuously marked upon cheeks that yielded in carnation hue to nought save the nose ; while this rallying point of the vital powers, like certain well-known altars of

once more, this long remembered attraction of his own—his said handsome legs. Accordingly, while setting to the lady, he made several kicks out in front, with accompanying jerks forward of the head, in the vain hope of catching a glimpse; but, alas, in one unfortunate effort more strenuous than the rest, he lost his balance; out flew his feet, and down he came on his back, so much to the amusement of the whole room that no one for a time had the presence of mind to pick him up: while there he lay, sprawling and puffing, his own endeavours to rise being quite as fruitless as those of a beetle usually are, when placed in the same reversed position by a mischievous school-boy. Neither was the evening by any means one of unmixed delight to the Misses Salter. It was but too evident that even on the present occasion, when, if ever

Miss Grace Salter was altogether of a different style ; she was under-sized, pitifully thin, and extremely dark, with an expression of countenance as if she had just swallowed something unseasonably bitter, and was making a face at its disagreeable flavour. The set with Sir James could not much sooth the vanity of either sister, for no sooner did he commence operations, then a ring was immediately formed for the avowed purpose of laughing at him ; while he, mistaking the general attention he drew for admiration, seemed gratefully determined to spare no pains to give the greatest possible satisfaction to his numerous spectators.

The Misses Salter had also another source of uneasiness this evening. At all times their greatest earthly apprehension, next to that of not getting husbands themselves, was, lest their

money, or else it would be a grand connection ! would'nt it ? We'd be sure to be visited by every body then."

" That we should, no doubt," said Miss Salter, " but what of that, we should'nt have a shilling in the world, comparatively speaking, when my father dies—and as for John—"

" He would'nt give us a shilling if we were starving !" observed Miss Grace.

By John, they meant their brother. And, by-the-by, one of the reasons, in addition to their want of beauty, why these ladies were paid so little attention to by the gentlemen, was, that it was well known, Mr. Salter had a cub of a son, on whom he meant, in imitation of his betters, to heap the earnings and savings of his life, for the purpose, as he himself expressed it, of making a family : and, for that matter he

" But supposing, Sir, we shouldn't get married at all," said Miss Salter one day.

" Nothing more likely," replied her father. " As for Grace, she is certainly as plain a girl as I'd desire to see any day. And I don't know how it is, you're not very handsome neither, tho' you're thought so like me."

These observations of Mr. Salter's about being the first of his family were, by the particular desire of his daughters, strictly confined to his own fireside. There was no occasion, they argued, to make any such confession in a place like Cheltenham, where nobody knew anything about people, but what they choose to say of themselves. Accordingly, they made family their constant theme ; and inquired with the most consequential airs about the connections of every one they heard named ; always

“And, by-the-by, was it quite prudent of us, on your plan, to cut Mrs. Dorothea Arden as we have done?”

“Oh, yes; what’s the use of an old maid, she can have no sons, you know; besides, we didn’t cut her till Lady Whaleworthy, and Lady Flamborough, and Lady Shaw-bridge, and all of them, had called; and then I thought we could spare such old lumber as Mrs. Dorothea.”

“Why, to be sure, as you say, she can have no sons; indeed I never even heard her speak of a brother or a nephew; and as to her expecting this Lady Arden that she is always talking about, I am sure its nothing but a boast.”

“Nothing more you may be certain! And then I was afraid my father would have taken

CHAPTER V.

LADY Arden, leaning on her son Alfred, her eldest daughter on the other side, her two younger following, had just entered the ball-room at Almacks.

The sisters, we have already said, were beautiful. They were all above the middle height, and finely formed; remarkably fair, with brilliant complexions, and very beautiful light brown hair.

Jane, the eldest, had her mother's amiable,

brilliant and its best imitations, most clearly seen when subjected to the ordeal of comparison.

Madeline, the youngest, had a rounder face than her sisters, the features not quite so fine, yet lovely in their own perfectly innocent joyousness; while beautifying dimples accompanied her smiles, and fairy cupids danced in her laughing eyes.

The sisters always dressed alike: on the present occasion, they all wore white lace over white satin; the lighter or outer drapery looped up on one side with a bunch of white roses, mixed with lilies of the valley: and a few of the same flowers in the hair on the contrary side. A set of diamonds each, unusually costly for girls, but which, by a whim of their maternal grandfather, they happened to possess, were their only ornaments.

Young Lord Nelthorpe, one of their nearest neighbours at Arden, now approached our party. Jane had noticed him for some time, and, on first doing so, had coloured deeply. They had not met before since their arrival in town. He came up to our party, was very polite, and even friendly, but not quite as cordial as might have been expected. He conversed with Lady Arden for a little time. Music commenced, he made a slight bow, and moving quickly towards a lady at a little distance, led her to the quadrille. Jane had been so perfectly certain that he intended to dance with her, that when the music began, she had instinctively drawn her arm half way from within her mother's. Her disappointment was bitter, and arose from a feeling much deeper than the mere loss of a partner for the dance could have excited.

nature cannot explain the motives which govern its members ; nor our own feelings, till we too become sophisticated, teach us to calculate upon those of others.

The attention of Alfred was just at this moment attracted by the appearance of the younger of two ladies, who were standing at a little distance. They were evidently, from their striking resemblance, mother and daughter. The stature of both was rather above the middle height ; that of the elder, from its queen-like carriage, and its being a little disposed to embonpoint, had a strikingly imposing and majestic effect ; while that of the younger, though perfectly formed and beautifully rounded, was so delicate in its proportions, and so timid in its air, as to require comparison to convince the eye that the actual elevation was the same. The

eye-brow, too, was the most delicately penciled, and her eye-lashes the longest, or they seemed so, her eyes being cast down; while those of the elder lady were raised and fully visible. They were dark, large, and brilliant; but the supercilious vanity with which they moved slowly round, courting the universal admiration they drew towards them, without once shrinking from its glare, made it impossible for their lustre, splendid as it was, to reach any heart.

Alfred observed an elderly gentleman with whom he was acquainted join the two ladies, and converse for a time with the air of an old intimate of the elder. As soon as he quitted them Alfred joined him; and with as much circumlocution, preparation, and management, as though he had in view nothing less than the place of prime minister, demanded if he could

venture to introduce him to his fair friends, as a candidate for the hand of the younger lady for the next quadrille. Nothing could be easier: Lord Darlingsford was intimate with the parties; accordingly, he presented our hero to Lady Palliser and her daughter, Lady Caroline Montague.

The eyes of the latter were, at the moment of introduction, of necessity fixed to Alfred's face. In colour, size, and liquid lustre they resembled her mother's; but oh, how unlike were they in their mild, beseeching expression; and in the tremulous movement of the lids; which, as if weighed down by their sable veil of silken lashes, hastened again to overshadow them. The transparent cheek too, at the same instant that the eyes were raised, had been visited by a deep blush; gifting, though but for a fleeting instant,

this beautiful, this almost too unearthly being with the warm glow of life.

The effect on Alfred of the momentary vision was decisive of his fate.

During the dance, to which this introduction led, the snatches of most exquisite pleasure experienced by our hero were when, by directly addressing his partner, he could again induce her to look up. On each such occasion, the beseeching expression already described, excited, despite the cooler suggestions of reason, a feeling as though the gentle appeal were addressed to him in particular. What was there so entreated that he would not have undertaken? The most difficult feats of ancient chivalry, nay, the impossibilities of necromancy itself, would have seemed tasks of easy performance in such a cause! His beautiful partner said very little,

of the Mist, had but ceased for a moment to be visible, and, in a moment more, again became palpable to sight.

From time to time she looked at Lady Palliser ; not, however, as though it were there she sought a refuge ; for, on the contrary, there was an indescribable something in the manner of the glance, which conveyed the idea that her ladyship was the principal object of her daughter's fears. Yet again, the moment the quadrille was concluded, Lady Caroline expressed a wish to rejoin her mother. Lady Palliser received our hero with a coldness that very soon made him feel obliged to take himself off. At once captivated and mortified, he felt disinclined to dance any more, and rather disposed to indulge in reveries, while pursuing with his eyes the form of his new acquaintance through the

moving crowd. Instead, however, of reclining indolently on a sofa, or lounging about with other men, he devoted himself, in the most amiable manner possible, to his mother and sisters for the remainder of the evening ; and though they found him somewhat deaf, performed, when they did make him hear, any little service they required of him with great alacrity. Notwithstanding which, ere the evening was over, each of his sisters had severally informed him that he was already in love. Such secrets are generally discovered by others before they are known to the parties themselves.

A friend of Lady Arden's, forgetful that her ladyship objected on principle to all younger sons, *except her own*, had introduced Henry Lindsey to Louisa. Her exquisite beauty dazzled and delighted him, while her gratified

vanity, at the enthusiasm of his admiration, made her manner so encouraging, that he believed himself well received, and gave himself up to hopes and feelings destined to cost him many a bitter pang.

Lord Darlingford, though a widower and a man, by his own account upwards of fifty, was much disposed, on the strength of his rank, to be a serious admirer of Jane Arden. This evening he found himself better received than usual; he did not deem it necessary to make a fool of himself by dancing, but was sitting apart with the lady, conversing very earnestly, and was just beginning to weigh the propriety of availing himself of so favourable an opportunity for making her an offer of marriage, when Lord Nelthorpe came up and asked her to dance. The moment before she had deter-

mined, if he did do so at this late period of the evening, to reject his offer. As soon, however, as he approached, and preferred his request, her spirited resolve vanished: with one of her sweetest smiles she rose and took his arm, and in the flurry of her spirits, forgetting to make even a parting bow to poor Lord Darlingford, left him sitting alone, looking what he was, quite forsaken, and cursing himself for an old fool.

Lord Neithorpe now took pains to be particularly agreeable, and either from vanity or lingering attachment, was evidently anxious to discover if he still retained the power he knew he had long possessed over the feelings of his fair partner. He made allusions to her late companion, and half jest, half earnest, ventured several whispered comments, almost amount-

ing to tender reproaches, watching her countenance while he did so. As he handed her into the carriage, he secretly wished, with something like a sigh, that he had no brothers and sisters to pay off. She went home in high spirits.

"I wish, Jane," said Lady Arden, as they drove from the door, "you would make up your mind to marry Lord Darlingford."

Jane made no reply.

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning Willoughby confided to his brother the determination he had come to on the last evening, of proposing for Lady Anne Armadale, the daughter of Lord Selby.

He described with great exultation how much attached the lady had been to a gentleman of whom her friends disapproved, and whom she was notwithstanding determined to marry up to the time he had become his rival; but that he had not been long in driving the former lover

from the field, and securing the preference of the lady.

Alfred, in his anxiety for his brother's happiness, forgot for the moment his usual dread of offering advice.

"For heaven sake," he said, "Willoughby, pause! Be *quite* certain that you have secured her real preference!"

"I *am* quite certain," said Willoughby, taking up his hat impatiently.

"Nay, do not be hasty either with the lady or with me."

"You think it is impossible for any woman to prefer me, I suppose. I have, I confess, no pretensions to be an Adonis," he added with a sneer, for he knew that Alfred was considered remarkably handsome; "at the same time all people's taste are fortunately not alike!"

" Nay, my dear Willoughby, do not be childish? Is it not wiser to use a little caution? Have you no fear of finding yourself, when too late, the husband of a woman capable of sacrificing her feelings to her interest?"

Willoughby abruptly quitted the room. He went directly to Lord Selby's, and in less than an hour had proposed for, and been accepted by Lady Anne Armadale.

Unhappily for Willoughby, the slender share of sense he possessed was not only at all times hoodwinked by vanity, but in general superseded in its operations by temper. For if any friend happened to offer him the slightest advice, so jealous was he of having it supposed his judgment required assistance, that, without waiting to consider if any offence was intended, he would feel perhaps but a momen-

tary resentment, yet, while under its dominion, as the readiest and most appropriate revenge, would resolve hastily on an opposite line of conduct to that suggested by his adviser ; and having once so resolved, obstinacy would put its seal on a determination which in fact had never been examined by his understanding, while had there been no interference, he would at least have considered the subject, and might, possibly, have come to a just conclusion.

A man of a decidedly superior mind, on the contrary, having no private misgivings respecting his own capacity, is always well pleased to take under consideration any new views of a subject, which the suggestions of a friend, or indeed of any one, may present. It is of course his own judgment which finally decides, but like a just judge, after first hearing every wit-

ness, that is to say every argument which can be brought to bear upon the subject. Acuteness in prejudging is the boast of the fool. Discrimination to give its due weight to every part of the evidence, the privilege of the man of sense. The fool is always telling you he can see with half an eye. We would request such persons to employ in future the whole of both orbs, and possibly with a vision so extraordinary, they might be enabled to pierce even to the bottom of that far-famed well, in which it is said that truth has hitherto lain hid from the researches of mankind.

Certainly no claim to merit or distinction can be more absurd than that which is founded on the wilfully limited means employed for producing the desired end.

Excellence, to challenge admiration, should

be excellence in the abstract; while he who would be even a respectable candidate for the prize, should use every power that Providence has given to man, avail himself of every ray of light that the experience of past ages has elicited, and bringing all to a focus, pour the concentrated beam on the path to be explored.

Thus only can each generation hope to gain some step on the road towards perfection unattained by its predecessor.

CHAPTER VII.

Gloucester Villa, the residence of Mr. Salter, at Cheltenham, was in a state of high preparation for a dinner to be given to Lady Flamborough.

Mrs. Johnson had no leisure to assist the young ladies to dress, they were therefore left to perform that office for each other.

“ By-the-by, I have been so much hurried, I forgot to tell you,” said Grace, “ but Lady Arden is now really coming: Mrs. Dorothea’s maid has been telling Johnson all about it.”

"Oh, I dare say it's just talk as usual," said Miss Salter.

"No, no, it's quite certain now," persisted her sister, "for Violet Bank is taken for her ladyship for six months certain, and the adjoining villa, Jessamine Bower, for another titled lady; and I daresay they'll be acquainted, so you see what we've lost!"

"Well, that is really provoking!" exclaimed Miss Salter. "I wonder would there be any use in sending her an invitation for this evening?"

"Sending who an invitation?" said Grace. "Mrs. Dorothea do you mean? Oh, quite ridiculous at this late hour; and after leaving her out of the ball too!"

"I know all that," replied Miss Salter; "but let me see, I'll write her a long apology

about having sent a card for our ball to her old lodgings in mistake! and for the short notice I'll say, that I know she likes friendly invitations better than formal ones, and that our party this evening is to be so particularly select, just what I know she likes; and then I'll give a list of the titles, and that I think will decide her, even if she does see through the excuses."

Accordingly Miss Salter, in great triumph at her own diplomatic abilities, wrote and dispatched her note.

"After all," she added, as she resumed her toilette, "these are sorrowful rejoicings for us, for I suppose with this fine lady coming to dinner, and being so gracious, and all that, she means to marry my father; and if she does, though to be sure it'll bring fine acquaintance,

I suppose, but will it bring us husbands?—on the contrary, if it gets abroad that we're not to have a shilling—”

“ We'll have but a poor chance, I'm afraid,” interrupted Grace.

“ But I'll tell you what I have done to endeavour to obviate that,” said her sister; “ I have been telling Johnson, and I have told her too that she may tell it where she pleases, for it's no harm that the truth should be known, that our mother's fortune was a hundred thousand pounds, and was so settled upon us that my father can't keep it from us; and she has begun already with Sir William Orm's man, and he has told his master, and Sir William is full of it; so we shall see how he behaves to-day.”

“ But what a shocking lie!” said Grace.

"Lie! Nonsense!" replied her sister, "Who tells the truth, I'd be glad to know?"

Here the answer to the note interrupted the conversation. It was of course a formal apology. Mrs. Dorothea had not been at a loss to see through the motives of her *friends* the Salters.

The *young* ladies now descended to the drawing-room, where Mr. Salter was already standing at a window, in high dress; with the bright white, angular points of a fresh put on collar, contrasting finely with the shining ruby of his cheeks. A carriage with a coronet drove up to the door; bless me, how fine! thought the Misses Salter; it was almost enough to reconcile their father's marrying again.

Lady Flamborough was announced. Her ladyship entered; her round, fat, rosy face,

smiling in a round wreath of red roses. Her dress, a colour de rose satin, her ornaments, necklace and earings of pink topaz.

The broad daylight, or rather sunshine, of the first day in May, in weather unusually fine, and even hot for the season, in a three windowed, south-west drawing room, at six o'clock, did ample justice to the glow of her ladyship's appearance, which nothing less than the entrance, immediately after, of Lady Whaleworthy, in a crimson velvet, could have at all subdued.

Lady Shawbridge arrived next. Her dress was a gold coloured velvet, and gold tissue turban, the wide circumference of which displayed the fiery countenance hinted at by Mrs. Dorothea to great advantage. Indeed the whole assembly was of a fiery order; although being, as we have said, hot weather, there was no oc-

DILEMMAS OF PRIDE.



casion for fire. But the very furniture of the room, unluckily for the day and aspect, was crimson, while in addition to the red and reddish countenances already enumerated, Miss Salter's face, on all warm occasions like the present, was much too apt to emulate the glow of her father's. While even poor Miss Grace, though in general, from hardness and thinness, a chilly object, was subject with peculiar provocation, to a dullish red knob, like a winter cherry, just at the end of her nose.

The rest of the party having arrived, and among them Sir William Orm, Sir James Lindsey, Sir Francis Brierton, and the general, dinner was announced. Mr. Salter gave his arm to Lady Flamborough, and leading the way, was followed by the rest of the company, to the dining-room; which, having the same aspect

as the drawing-room, and being, besides over the kitchen, was by no means calculated to cool the already heated guests. The two turtles, we mean Mr. Salter and Lady Flamborough, every way so well *entitled* to the *title*, being in their forms turtles, and in their present dispositions towards each other turtle doves, took their loving seats side by side, opposite to the turtle-soup, at the head of the table. (Men who have no wives of course head their own tables.)

The dinner having been entirely provided at so much a-head, by a pastrycook, who was to remove its remains, was of course only too good, we mean too fine, too much ornamented, too technical; in fact the display of each course resembled more a confectioner's counter than a gentleman's table. Every thing, in short, was

so befrosted, and so beglazed, that if one had been at all absent, one might have put one's hand in one's pocket, and asked what was to pay.

It is an acknowledged fact, that to act the gentleman is impossible. It is equally impossible for people, though possessed of the purse of Fortunatus, to ape successfully, on special occasions, a style of living not habitual to them.

We hope we have not cooled the turtle-soup by our digression. Poor Mr. Salter, instead of quietly conveying ladles of soup to soup-plates, till the demand ceased, was most unnecessarily prolonging his own labours, and delaying the progress of the feast, by deliberately inquiring of every several member of the assembly by name, if they chose turtle-soup, and poising the while, his insignia of office over the tureen,

full their ear caught the question and his the
reply.

By the time similar rites had been performed
over every steaming remove, it may be believed
that the countenance of our host had lost nothing
of its brilliancy. During the dessert he had
more leisure to turn its lustre, adorned with
smiles, on his fair companion; whose uplifted
eyes languishingly met his, till there wanted but
the pipe to make the pair an excellent study for
a painter of the Dutch school. The attitude too,
leaning back at their ease in their chairs, so
favourably displayed their forms, that the couple
in this particular very much resembled a *pair*
of globes; though we must confess that, except
in courtesy to the lady, we should not have been
disposed to designate either the celestial.

Sir William Orm, who had handed in Miss

Salter, was descanting with much feeling on the interested motives which governed the matrimonial views of but too many men in the world, and declaring that such must ever be secondary considerations with him. Miss Salter confessed that amiable sentiments like his were very rare now a days, and consequently the more to be admired. On the opposite side, Sir James Lindsey was giggling with silly self-satisfaction, as he sat receiving the assiduous attentions and pointed compliments of Miss Grace. While Lady Shawbridge was remarking aside to Sir Matthias Whaleworthy, that Lady Flamborough's youthful airs were quite disgusting; and Sir Matthias in return, made some comments on Mr. Salter's dancing, which sounded very ungrateful, proceeding from lips

which had just finished a *second* plate of the man's turtle-soup.

Lady Whaleworthy, good soul, was telling Sir Henry Shawbridge one of the long stories about herself, her father and mother, brothers and sisters, husband, children, and servants, which she inflicted on all who had the misfortune to sit near, and the patience to listen to her.

Ere the ladies left the dining-room, the now completely enamoured Mr. Salter had determined, that in the course of the evening he would take a sly opportunity of making Lady Flamborough an offer of his heart and hand. Alas ! how vain are human resolves, when we know not what an hour or at most an hour and a half may bring forth ; for it could not have

exceeded that time, when the gentlemen followed the ladies to the drawing-room, and yet Mr. Salter's visual organs by some process, possibly connected with a certain series of toasts, which despite of fashion, he might have felt it his duty to propose, had in that short period undergone such an extraordinary change, that when he approached what ought to have been the sole object of his affections, he beheld as it were two Lady Flamboroughs, sitting, or rather attempting to sit, on the same chair! He gazed in utter amazement, and strove to concentrate the powers of sight: for a second the mysterious vision amalgamated, and was but one! again, however, it glided asunder, and became two! nor did this happen but once, so as to leave any room for doubt or mistake, on the contrary, while our astonished host still stood staring, the ex-

traordinary processa was frequently repeated. Nay, once, as lured by the smiles of the fair shadow nearest him, he ventured to address some complimentary remark to its ear in particular, it slid away as if for refuge behind its representative, and immediately after popped in view on the other side !

Whether it is that supernatural appearances have a tendency to awe the passions into stillness, or whether this glaring infringement on the classical laws of unity, by dividing, destroys the interest ; or whether possibly, some vague dread of being betrayed unconsciously into the sin of bigamy, might have presented itself to the imagination of Mr. Salter, we have not philosophical lore nor critical acumen sufficient to decide; we can only speak to the effect, which was, that Mr. Salter, instead of finding

with this double provocation a double share of love inundating his heart and overflowing his lips, was struck perfectly mute, and continued so for the remainder of the evening.

So much for lovers continuing their libations at Bacchus' shrine until they see double.

CHAPTER VIII.

"WELL, there is nothing like getting into *select* society after all!" said Miss Salter to her sister, when they had retired for the night.
"Who would have thought, six months ago, of both of us having baronets for lovers? I dare say you are right, Grace, and that this marriage of my father's (for I suppose now it will take place), is the best thing that could have happened for us. And I know, I'm determined when I'm married to Sir William Orm (and he has gone great lengths, I assure you), that I will

visit none but titled people. And tell me, how did you and Sir James get on?"

"Oh, delightfully!" answered her sister, "he asked me if I thought him very handsome ; and of course I said I did ; and then he laughed so. And then he asked me if I thought the silk of his waistcoat a pretty pattern ; and I said I did ; and he told me a lady chose it for him. And he asked me if I was inclined to be jealous ; and I said if I thought he had any regard for me, I'd be jealous of every lady that looked at him ; and he said, 'would you indeed ?' and laughed again. And he asked me if I admired his dancing as much as most people did, for that he was thought a first rate dancer ; and I said that nobody could help admiring his dancing. And he asked me if I could think what in the world it was that made so many young ladies refuse to dance

with him ; and I said it was, to be sure, because he danced so well that they were afraid it would make their own bad dancing the more noticed. ‘And do you really think so ?’ said he, laughing again. And so, at last, only think ! he asked me if I’d like very much to be my lady ! and I said I should of all things. And so then he laughed, and said he could make any body a lady he chose.”

“ And I hope you said you wished he’d make you one,” interrupted her sister.

“ Why I thought of it,” replied Miss Grace, “ but I was afraid people would hear me ; if we had been quite by ourselves, I would have said it.”

“ What nonsense !” exclaimed Miss Salter. “ If you can get to be my lady, and have fifteen thousand a-year at your command, I think you

can afford to defy people's comments about how you came by it ! You said, the other day, that if luck knocked once at your door, it shouldn't have to knock twice. I'm sure it knocked then, with a vengeance, and such a knock as comes to the doors of but few, I can tell you ; and you the fool not to answer it. It's such as you'll never hear again, with your little ugly black-moor face. And when you had the good fortune to get hold of a fool that didn't know the difference, if you dosed his draught with flattery enough, you should have said or done anything to please him, blockhead that you are."

" You needn't be so abusive, Eliza," said poor Grace, almost whimpering, " I'm sure I thought I was barefaced enough, this time, to please you."

" Such stuff, with your mock modesty," interrupted Miss Salter.

“And as for a black face, it’s as good as a red one, any day,” continued Grace, “and rather *genteeler* for that matter,” she added, “since you’re grown so mighty fond of gentility.”

Miss Salter’s rage now knew no bounds, and consequently became so coarse and disgusting in its manifestation, that we shall forbear any further representation of the scene.

Vulgar people are bad enough in good humour. Propitious fate deliver us from them when they are out of temper!

Before proceeding further with our history, we may as well take the present opportunity of sketching slightly the origin of this same titled personage, by a connection with whom the Misses Salter expected to gain so much consequence. Lady Flamborough was the only child of an hotel-keeper, who, in his hospitable calling,

had amassed enormous wealth. He had not always, however, been the great man, even in his own line, which he ultimately became. His daughter, therefore, to the age of five or six, was brought up, literally running about in a very minor establishment, little better, in short, than a road-side posting-house ; and, being a pretty, rosy, fat child, had, up to that age, been the pet and plaything, not only of her father, (she had no mother living), but of every waiter and hostler in and about the house. And often had she sat on her father's knee, while he drank his ale in the bar, and, when the jest and the tale went round, which were, as yet, to the ear of the child, a foreign tongue, laughed merrily for very glee at seeing others laugh. But alas ! amid the sounds and sights of scenes like these, native delicacy, even at this early age, was lost.

For callousness is not so much a wrong bias given, as a class of feelings, out of which some of the most valuable traits of character are hereafter to be formed, destroyed; and if the material be gone, how can the superstructure be raised?

The child was, after this, sent to expensive boarding-schools, and as her father's fortunes rose, given every possible accomplishment. In these, and her being very pretty, Mr. * * * *, afterwards Lord Flamborough, but then a younger brother, and of course poor, found some apology for overlooking the lady's want of birth, and appropriating her immense wealth, which was his true object.

Soon after his marriage, his brother died, and he succeeded to the title and estates; and now, bitterly repenting his ill-assorted union, behaved

with neglect, and even contempt, towards his wife. Upon which the lady, partly out of revenge, and partly out of levity, gave a favourable reception to the addresses of a lover in no very exalted sphere of life.

Proceedings were immediately instituted to obtain legal redress; but before the divorce had passed the house, his lordship, who had previously been in a bad state of health, chanced to die.

Lady Flamborough, therefore, though of course banished all tolerable society, still continued to be Lady Flamborough, and to enjoy a handsome jointure. On her total expulsion from the set among whom her marriage had, for a time, given her a place, she descended till she found her level among that, rationally speaking, only disreputable class, made up of those

who have lost caste by their own wilful departures from principle, and those who are contemptible enough to be willing to associate with vice, for the love of the *tarnished tinsel* which once was rank; forgetful that titles and honors were first invented as badges of the virtuous or heroic deeds of those on whom they were bestowed; that only as such they have any meaning; and that, when borne by the vicious, they become, in a peculiar degree, objects for the finger of scorn to point at, and seem to claim, as their especial privilege, the contempt and derision of mankind.

"Tis *plain* absurd to call a villain great."

Titles are attainted for high treason, why should they not be so for every treason against good morals? Are not good morals as essential

to the well-being of the community as good Government?

Nay, what is Government? Power to enforce moral order. Why then should not a sin against the end be visited as severely as a sin against the means?

Are men, whose vices invade the peace of the domestic hearth, and sunder the sacred ties of life,—or men who court luxury in foreign climes, while evading the payment of their just debts at home; consigning the while industrious tradesmen and their helpless families to ruin;—are men, in short, who are no longer men of honour, to be still misnamed *noble men*? Is it not the natural tendency of such misnomers to bring nobility into contempt? And is not this an injustice to the truly *noble*?

Are the vicious to be allowed to sully honors till the honourable cannot wear them ?

Nobility would indeed be beautiful were it a guarantee of virtue ! titles would indeed be honours, if the men who bore them must be pure ! And if the certainty that those titles for ages had existed in that family, were thus an assurance that morality for centuries had not been sinned against in that house, then indeed, would rank be nobility. Let us not be misunderstood : let us not be supposed to mean that men of rank are more likely to offend against the laws of morality than other men ; on the contrary, education and circumstances ought to render them less so : we simply assert, that when they do so offend, such offence ought to degrade them from their rank as *noble men*.

How glorious would be that land that first enacted such a law ! how worthy its monarch of that greatest of his titles, “Defender of the Faith !” For what is this faith ? Religion ! and the author of Religion has defined it thus :

“True religion and undefiled, before God and the Father is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world.”

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Dorothea had been so busy all day, changing her lodgings again, that she had hardly had time to ask Sarah a word about the Salters' dinner-party.

On this occasion, however, we must remark, that she had moved to a furnished house, not to a mere lodging ; for she was determined to make an exertion, while the Ardens were in Cheltenham, live how she might the rest of the year, having a great horror of living like a poor relation.

Most people have a particular objection to seeming to be what they really are.

Indeed Lady Arden had written most kindly to Mrs. Dorothea, inviting her to spend the time they should be at Cheltenham with them. Had the expense of a house or lodging been no object to Aunt Dorothea, she would gladly have availed herself of this invitation for the pleasure of the thing; but the arrangement would have been so very convenient, that her *pride* took the alarm, and would not suffer her to accept the offer. In her father's life time, as a daughter of the then head of the family, she had acquired notions of her own consequence, which became a painful incumbrance from the moment her circumstances underwent that violent revolution to which those of the daughters of the proudest and most ancient families are peculiarly liable.

Pride in any situation is a moral disease, which it would be highly desirable to see for ever banished from the world ! but *pride*, when complicated with poverty, is apt to render the unhappy sufferer not only always very uncomfortable, but often very ridiculous. Added to which, it must ever be impossible for the heart that harbours *pride* to know contentment.

At present, however, Mrs. Dorothea was quite delighted. The house she had taken for six months certain for Lady Arden, though designated by the rural title of Violet Bank, was a splendid mansion. The one she had taken for herself for the same period, was both pretty and agreeably situated ; it was accommodated with a cook, or maid of all work, who was taken with it as a part of the furniture. Mrs. Dorothea had also hired a footman for the great occasion, and

put him into livery; so that with Sarah, her own maid, she had now, for a single lady, quite a respectable little establishment, and could look forward to returning the evening entertainments, at least of her relations, on something of an independent footing. Dinners of course she could not give, nor need she accept them; she did not care what she eat. She certainly liked the best society, and that she should now have, without laying herself under obligations to any one. For, much as she liked Lady Arden, (one whom no one could help liking, she was so truly amiable,) she could not forget that her ladyship was a stranger in blood, from whom, consequently, an *Arden* could not receive even a courtesy without requital.

Mrs. Dorothea was so glad too, as she told Sarah, while she stood in the centre of her new

drawing-room, looking round her, to get out of that horrid place where she had been for the last two months, sitting every evening on those tiresome little chairs, for, as Sarah had prophesied, her landlady had never given her the sofa, nor put the drops to the chimney-light, nor even got a key for the chiffonier. Then, the woman of the house could not or would not afford a decent servant, so that the cooking was shocking, and the attendance wretched ; and then the oven of the bakehouse next door she found out at last was just on the other side of the one brick thin wall, against which her bed stood, so that she had been nearly baked to death, and had been losing her health without knowing why. To be sure the carpet looked respectable, but then the lodging had no other recommendation, as in addition to its many dis-

comforts, it had proved one way or other very expensive ; for mistaking the heat and restlessness she felt at nights for the consequences of the lassitude and want of appetite of which they were in fact the cause ; she had got frightened about herself, and had called in doctor after doctor, and taken ever so much medicine in vain, till at last happening to go in next door to correct an error in her baker's bill, in which she had been charged with all the bread supplied to her landlady, she became acquainted with the geography of the premises, and so discovered the whole mystery. Then being without a key to the chiffonier too, made a great difference in the groceries, though having no proof of the fact, it would not do to say so. This might have brought down the lawyers upon her ; then indeed would the cup of her afflictions have

been full. Poor Aunt Dorothea felt almost restored to the days of her youth by the comparative comforts which now surrounded her. She moved into her regular dining-room when her dinner was ready, and was there decently and respectfully attended by her own footman in livery. There was a sideboard, and her few articles of plate were arranged upon it, and things looked orderly and comfortable; it was enough to give one an appetite, and made her boiled chicken and quartet of a hundred of asparagus seem a dinner for an emperor. Instead of dining in the comfortless scumble she used to do, in her haste to send the tray out of the drawing-room lest some one should come in, she now eat as slowly as possible to prolong the gratifying sense of dignity which accompanied the ceremony.

The very next day the Misses Salter had the impudence to call, and the new footman not being in the family secrets, admitted them.

On their entrance Aunt Dorothea looked her astonishment with great dignity.

"What a sweet situation," exclaimed Miss Salter.

"What a charming house," said Miss Grace. Mrs. Dorothea bowed.

"How fortunate we were in finding you at home," said Miss Salter.

"Oh, yes, very fortunate indeed!" added Miss Grace. Mrs. Dorothea bowed again.

"How sorry we were you could not come to us last night," said Miss Salter, "we had such a *select* party, just what you would have liked."

"Yes, just what you would have liked," echoed Miss Grace.

"I hope we shall be more fortunate the next time," said Miss Salter. "We shall have a great many of those agreeable *select* parties just now. Our *particular friend*, Lady Flamborough, you see, and our *particular friend*, Lady Whaleworthy, and our *particular friend*, Lady Shawbridge, and all that pleasant set being here just now, naturally induces one to see a great deal of company. Then there are such delightful young men here at present, and that you know always makes parties pleasant, there's *our friend*, Sir William Orm, such an elegant fashionable young man."

"And Sir James Lindsey," observed Miss Grace, "an old baronet, with fifteen thousand a-year."

"Yes," said Miss Salter, "such an agreeable good tempered little man, so affable and un-

suming. And there is General Powel too, in short we quite abound in *nice young men*. And I hope," added Miss Salter, with an air of great friendship, "that we shall soon and often have the pleasure of seeing you, Mrs. Arden."

" You are very obliging," replied Mrs. Dorothea, bowing gravely, " but my arrangements will for some considerable time be controlled entirely by those of my sister, Lady Arden, and her family, with whom I shall consider myself engaged, either at home or abroad, every day during their stay."

" So you expect Lady Arden," said Miss Salter, with well affected surprise. " Dear me, I'm sure we should be most happy to pay attention to any friend of yours."

" You are very obliging," observed Mrs. Dorothea, with if possible increasing stiffness,

"but Lady Arden does not mean to extend her acquaintance."

The discomfited Misses Salter finding lingering and last words useless, at length took their departure.

The Ardens dined on the road, but arrived in time to take tea with Aunt Dorothea. The weather was beautiful; the rural appearance of the little villa, situated among the plantations and pleasure grounds of the public walks, its own miniature lawn and veranda, adorned with flowers and flowering shrubs, and garlanded with roses as if for a festival, the fine trees of the Old-Well-Walk in view, and bands of music, as if hid in every grove, sending forth on each breeze some strain of melody, all seemed delightful and refreshing to people just escaped from the heat and fatigue of London. While

the large and joyous looking family party, some seated within the open glass door, some standing in the veranda, some straying on the fresh mown turf of the little lawn, formed a picture of social felicity quite delightful to the usually solitary Aunt Dorothea; to whom the idea of the party being not only her near relatives, but also her guests, was altogether so pleasing that she had not been as happy for many years. To her kind heart must be ascribed the chief of the pleasure she experienced; if, however, there was a slight admixture of gratified vanity we cannot be surprised, when we consider that a pretty comfortable house of her own, in which to receive her friends, was to her so great a novelty.

CHAPTER X.

So fond is youth of novelty, that Alfred and his sisters, though fresh from all the gaieties a London season has to offer, were quite impatient, the very morning after their arrival, to visit the public walks, of which they had had peeps the evening before from Aunt Dorothea's veranda. They had been told that about seven was the hour. Accordingly, as it was a fine sunny morning, the girls were all up soon after six. They had been told too, that notwithstanding the hour, it was usual to be extremely fine; but for

this their habits of good taste were too inveterate; they equipped themselves therefore in quite close bonnets, and having roused and enlisted the goodnatured Alfred, set off for Mrs. Dorothea's, Lady Arden having by an arrangement of the evening before, committed the young people to the charge of their aunt, knowing that she should be too much fatigued herself after her journey to rise so early.

Aunt Dorothea was quite ready. She was too happy in feeling herself necessary to her nieces, too happy in having the charge of them, too justly proud of them, proud of their beauty, and all their many attractions and recommendations, to feel anything like laziness, this first morning that she was to show, not only the walks to them, but them to the walks.

Thither then they proceeded immediately,

guided through each shady maze, as in the play called *Magic Music*, in which the sounds become louder to denote nearness to the object of pursuit. So did the swelling notes of the band grow on the ear as they approached the immediate spot, which it is fashion's whim to throng as closely as any crowded assembly-room, while all around is comparative solitude.

Here all-kind Aunt Dorothea's proud anticipations were fully answered by the sensation her nieces produced ; every eye was turned towards them, and in ten minutes [after their first appearance all the company who sat on the benches on either side the walk had asked each other who they were; the *manimas* who had daughters, and the young ladies who were not young, decided that they were not the style of beauty they admired, while the very young girls

and all the men, had pronounced them the loveliest creatures they had ever beheld. As for the mothers who had sons, they prudently suspended their judgments till they should hear what fortunes the Miss Ardens were likely to have.

Our party were joined instantly by Henry Lindsey. He had ascertained their movements from themselves, and quitted town when they did to be in Cheltenham before them. He was at Louisa's side in a moment, and was received with a blush and a smile which, though produced in part at least by gratified vanity, seemed to his generous nature all he could desire of encouragement. He was of course introduced to Aunt Dorothea, who, until she found out that he was a younger brother, was quite delighted with him.

The Arden party now took advantage of vacant seats which presented themselves, and for a time became in their turn spectators of the moving crowd.

Soon after which, announced by noise, and with many coloured streamers flying, the fleet of the Salters, and their *select* friends hove in sight.

There was in the first place Mr. Salter, with a white hat on, which duly set off by contrast, that true secret for producing effect, a countenance, the hue of which we flatter ourselves we need not again describe. Lady Flamborough embellished his arm; her head thrown back, and adorned by a pink crape hat and feathers, her eyes raised, and practising their most becoming roll, her complexion heightened by the heat of the weather and the long walk up

through the Sherbourn. Not that her dress was oppressive, on the contrary, it was light enough in all conscience, consisting of the softest India muslin, trimmed with superfine Mechlin lace, and ornamented at the neck, and at the wrists round the top, and round the bottom, down the sleeves, and down the front, with ties, bows, and ends innumerable, of pink ribbon, while a broad long sash of the same encircled the waist, tied behind in dancing-school fashion. The dress was made nearly as low round the bust as a dinner costume, while what shelter there was to compensate for this was derived from the long pendant white gauze-ribbon strings, and deep blond-lace edge of the hat, with merely a slight pink gauze-scarf, scarcely wider or longer than the said strings.

The next in the line (as it approached cross-

ing the walk abreast), was Lady Whaléworthby, defying hot weather and sunshine in a crimson velvet pelisse. It was a thing which, as she told her own maid when putting it on, had cost too much money to be ever either out of season or out of fashion: it was only your dabs of things which every body could have that were sure to go out again before you could turn yourself round in them, so that there was no saving in the end. “I always tell Sir Matthias that a right good article, cost what it will at the first, is sure to be the cheapest in the long run.”

Poor Lady Whaléworthby! a crimson-velvet pelisse had been the dream of her youth when she did not think she should ever possess such a treasure! and still such the hold of early impressions in a crimson-velvet pelisse was con-

centrated her ladyship's notions of the *ne plus ultra* of magnificence. Next came little Sir James, fantastically fine, with a lilac figured silk waistcoat, as many gold chains as a lady, and a glaring brooch, the gift of Miss Grace Salter, and taken for the purpose of being so bestowed from her own dress, and with her own brown hands transferred to the breast of his open-work-fronted and diamond buttoned inner garment; while the little man, during the whole performance of the flattering operation, had laughed almost hysterically.

Three titles were very well to muster for a morning walk ; so next came the Misses Salter themselves. They never dressed alike, having each their own notion of the colours that became them. In shape, however, both their hats had been made by the same pattern, borrowed

for the purpose from Lady Flamborough's. Miss Salter's was of yellow crape, Sir William Orm having been his own jockey at a late race, and rode in a yellow jacket; while Miss Grace's, in compliment to Sir James's waistcoat was lilac; both, of course, flaunted with feathers, blond, and streaming strings, and had artificial flowers stuck in the inside. Nor had such a show of beauty and fashion been a mere lucky bit; the Misses Salter, on quitting Mrs. Dorethea's, had fully weighed the subject, and resolved to show the Ardens, who might else be prejudiced against them, that they were not people to be looked down upon; they had gone to infinite pains in making their arrangements.

Alas! little did they think that this very morning was marked in the book of fate to cost them both their lovers: they, too, who had none to

spare. But unhappily ladies so situated are so fond of showing off a supposed conquest—so fond of being suspected of being about to be married, that in their haste to be congratulated, they too often cast away all cause for gratulation ; and by the noise they raise themselves, put a man on his guard before he is above half caught, whom they might perhaps have secured, had they been satisfied to delay their triumph, and keep him nodding at the home fireside till they had quietly netted him round. We speak of course only of ladies in *distress*, like the Misses Salter. The lovely sisters of Arden, on the contrary, so far from being under the necessity of laying snares for lovers, found them at their feet wherever they went ; the only difficulty was to select from among them such as might both please themselves, and come up to their mamma's

and brother's ideas of matches suitable to their family consequence. We left our party seated on one of the benches, which, as we have already stated, were ranged on either side this favourite portion of the walk. The eye of Sir James, as he passed with the Salters, was instantly caught by the extreme loveliness of the beautiful sisters. For the poor little man, though he had neither sense nor judgment to direct him in the formation of any thing approaching to an opinion, was not without some of the natural elements of taste, and was especially a great admirer of beauty: it dazzled and delighted him, as new and splendid toys would a child; and it was much that he had been taught to say, like the good child, "I'll only look!" for he would often stand with his hands behind his back, as if the attitude to keep them out of the way

of temptation, and to stare at strangers whose appearance happened to strike him, till people would be first offended, and finally guess the truth, that poor Sir James was silly.

On the present occasion, seeing his brother with the party which had drawn his attention, he joined him instantly; and even while speaking to him, as well as for some time after, eagerly passed his eyes again and again along the row of ladies, till they were finally fixed by the peculiar lustre of Louisa's beauty.

Henry now introduced his brother, and the party rose to renew their walk. Sir James attached himself to them entirely, and contrived, too, to make a good position next to Louisa, whose appetite for admiration was so insatiable, that even his was acceptable. While the whole party were so goodnatured, so agreeable, and so

much amused ; yet so much too well bred to show it in the rude and flagrant manner indulged in by too many towards those labouring under natural infirmities, that poor Sir James was perfectly delighted, and felt as if he was among the most charming, kind, agreeable people in the whole world.

The Misses Salter had in the mean time made several attempts to bow to Mrs. Dorothea ; but that lady always took care to be so much occupied with other people, as to make it impossible for them to catch her eye. She however noticed their proceedings ; and observing that some time after the desertion of Sir James, Sir William Orm arrived and joined them, she laid her plans accordingly. Sir William would not do to introduce to her nieces, but he should nevertheless desert Miss Salter.

The walk now began to thin ; on which the Arden party, having invited Sir James and Henry Lindsey home with them to breakfast, an invitation very usual on the Cheltenham promenade, took the path which led to their own villa.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN breakfast was over, and the gentlemen had taken their departure, Louisa was amazingly laughed at by her sisters about her new lover.

He was mimicked and ridiculed in every possible way ; walk, air, manner, voice, modes of expression, ways of looking, &c. &c. ; till the girls had perfectly fatigued themselves with laughing.

We have heard it said, that it was a service of danger for any man to become the admirer of

one of a large family; for that, let him be ever so successful in talking the lady of his choice into love, she was sure the moment he absented himself to be laughed out of it again by her sisters. It is no wonder, then, that poor Sir James did not escape. Lady Arden, however, and Mrs. Dorothea came from time to time to the rescue of the little baronet's memory.

"Heedless creatures!" said Aunt Dorothea, "how little thought you give to the future!"

"I only hope he may be serious, and really propose for Louisa," said Lady Arden; "and if he should, I trust she will have the sense to pause before she rejects so advantageous an offer."

"But then, mamma, is he not a fool?" asked Louisa.

"Why no, my dear, not exactly that. In-

deed, I know a great many ill-tempered, reserved sort of men, without a grain more sense, who pass for Solomons ! He is a vain little man, certainly ; and perhaps too goodnatured. But then, only consider what a vastly *eligible* establishment it would be : you would have rank yourself, and be at once restored to the wealth and station lost to you all by the death of your father ; and what, my dear, is still more important, you would be rescued *in time* from the comparative poverty, and consequent obscurity into which you must ultimately sink, if you survive me unmarried."

What dilemmas so humiliating as those to which *Pride* reduces its votaries !

Lady Arden, by nature amiable, affectionate, and high-minded ; but by education tainted with false pride, thus stooped to the very depth of

meanness, unconscious of degradation; and sacrificed her purest feelings to the supposed necessity of securing to her daughters that artificial station in life which a system of unjust monopoly had for a time given them, and of which the same system had again deprived them.

Artificial positions in society, like unnatural attitudes of the body, cannot be long persisted in without pain and weariness. Where is the dignity of human nature? Forgotten! for were it remembered, the beggar, when educated, might share it with us; and at this false pride takes alarm! And, therefore, do we leave man out of the account, and worship idols of silver and idols of gold, and titles made of the breath of our own lips.

"From *Pride* our very reasoning springs."

Louisa had nothing to say against such unanswerable arguments as those Lady Arden had used ; but she thought of Henry Lindsey, and could not help wishing that he had been the elder brother, or, at least, that the fortune had been divided : even seven thousand five hundred with him would have been better, she could not help thinking, than the whole fifteen thousand with Sir James.

" It is always desirable," continued Lady Arden, " that a girl should marry in the same station as her father ; but it is not always practicable, particularly if she is a daughter of the elder branch ; for no family can have more than one elder son, while many may have half a dozen daughters, no one of whom ought, in common prudence, to marry a younger brother ! ! "

" Nay," said Alfred, " is not this sufficient to

show how absurdly society is constituted? What is to become, then, of five out of every six daughters, and all the younger sons in the world? What is to become of my hapless self, for instance?"

"We must hope, my dear, that you may be fortunate, and meet with an heiress."

"But consider, ma'am, how few heiresses there are. Parliament ought to make a new batch every session. It would, however, be of no use to me if they did," he added, despondingly, "for heiresses, of course, consider themselves entitled to marry, not only elder sons, but noblemen. I have often thought what is to become of me, if I should ever have the misfortune to fall in love."

"You did, I think, fall half in love one evening in town," said Jane.

"And, by-the-by," observed Lady Arden,
"Lady Caroline Montague is an heiress."

Alfred coloured, and rising, sauntered towards a window as he replied, "And, therefore, very unlikely to be allowed to cast away a thought on an unfor——" Here he broke off, and after gazing for a time from the window, exclaimed, "That was certainly she—I had but a momentary view, but I am quite sure it was she I saw pluck a rose in that next garden, and run into the house again. Can they be living in the adjoining villa to us?"

The grass gardens or little lawns of these twin villas were separated only by wire palings, along which sweet briar and flowering shrubs were trained.

CHAPTER XII.

THE family party, with the addition of Lord Darlingford, Sir James Lindsey, and his brother, were assembled round the luncheon-table at Lady Arden's.

Henry Lindsey had been amazingly piqued that morning by Louisa's reception of Sir James. The little baronet was now seated next to her, and making, if possible, a greater fool of himself than usual; while, in consequence of the lesson she had received, she was yielding him her attention with marked complacency.

Henry sat opposite, and trembled with a mingling of agitation and indignation. He thought he could already foresee that he was to be deliberately immolated to avarice; yet, so thoroughly was he the slave of Louisa's beauty and his own passion, that no worthlessness on her part could have set him free. He felt, that were she already the wife of his brother, her image might drive him mad, but that he could not banish it from his imagination.

The hardship of Henry Lindsey's case as a younger brother was conspicuous, and displayed in a striking manner the evils consequent upon sacrificing justice to *pride*.

From a boy he had felt much on this subject; but being of a generous, warm-hearted, liberal nature, he did not long brood over his own individual wrongs; his mind, however,

following the impulse thus received, though in the first instance from a selfish feeling, gave itself to the contemplation and discussion of natural rights generally, till it became enamoured of abstract justice, and learned to apply its searching test to every subject, especially the all absorbing topic of the day—Political Economy; while, with his characteristic enthusiasm, despising the sophisms of expediency, he embraced, without perhaps sufficient caution, theories which soon caused him to be considered by his friends a reformer, by his enemies almost a revolutionist, and by himself the warm advocate of the rights, not of younger brothers only, but of those whom he emphatically termed the step-children of the laws—*The People*.

Such were at all times his opinions, while the irritable state of his mind, at the moment

of which we are speaking, added asperity to his manner of expressing himself, and caused him, in answer to some jesting remark of Alfred's on the old topic of younger brothers, to give vent to his feelings in a long, and almost angry political discussion. He objected, he said, to the law of primogeniture on the ground of its being a wretched system of monopoly, which placed in the hands of a simple individual what, if divided, would suffice to restore thousands of his degraded and oppressed fellow-creatures to the rank of humanity. The times were gone by when communities, formed for the general weal, would wilfully sacrifice prosperity to *pride*, and not only parcel out the whole land to, comparatively speaking, a few families, but the succession to those lands being limited to the elder branches, allow all place, preferment,

and emolument, to be confined to the younger sons of the same families, because the land had given them influence; and the mass of the people to be thus reduced to do the work of the ass and the mule, and because they cannot also eat their food, the grass and the thistle, be often in danger of starvation.

The old feudal system itself was better than this: the ancient baron was at least bound to feed not only his relations but his vassals, and he did so in his own hall, at his own table. While, now-a-days, a man, as soon as his father's funeral is over, turns his brothers and sisters out of doors, to exist as they may, on a pitiful portion, the principal of which is in general infinitely less than one year's income of the property, on the scale of which they have been accustomed to live in their

father's time; while the new master permits his servants to collect their wages by showing the empty baronial hall to strangers at so much per head, by which creditable means he is himself enabled to reserve all his rents to stake at hazard in London, or at *rouge et noir* in Paris. When parliament is sitting, he must of course attend, to vote against any infringement on his monopoly, which the enlightened spirit of the times may chance to propose. Thanks, however, to the Reform Bill, the holders of the monopolies are no longer our sole law-givers; we have now some *chance of justice one time or another*.

"Besides," he added, "to return to the ancient baron, he was not only bound to feed his retainers, but in time of war to provide the government with a certain number of

them, fitly clothed and armed ; which was virtually bearing the burdens of the state. The baron was, in point of fact, but the trustee to a certain property, which property was to feed a certain number of the population, and to contribute its due proportion to the defence of the community. Instead of this, when the feudal system becomes dangerous to government the barons are forbidden to arm, and exonerated from feeding their retainers ; yet, the trust-property left in their hands for *pocket-money*, while their late followers are not only turned out on the wide world to starve, but the taxes necessary to maintain the army which the barons are forbid to provide, are levied on the *bare palms* of the *hands* of the thus turned out and starving vassals ; and not satisfied with this injustice, those who thus keep possession of the trust-

lands, have arrived at literally billeting their younger sons on those said vassals, thus turned out and starving."

"Explain! explain!" cried Lord Darlingsford, "How can you make that out?"

"Are not," replied Henry, "the salaries and pensions of all the posts and sinecures they hold paid by means of taxes, a great proportion of which are levied on industry? Is this as it should be? If the *pride* of the great demand that their properties shall be inherited by their elder sons, and the offspring of that *pride*—if *false necessity*, require that places and sinecures be provided for their younger sons, should not the *rich co-operate* in raising a fund for the payment of the salaries of such, and not grind their thousands by pittances from the *real necessities of the poor?*"

"What then is your panacea for so many crying ills?" asked Lord Darlingford, "Do you call on us to render up our trusts and proclaim an Agrarian law?"

"No; those whose motives are honest dare not go such lengths. This would be to resolve society into its mere elements, to open the flood-gates of anarchy, and awake the savage spirit of wanton plunder. Many large landed properties too have been purchased with the wages of industry; so that besides the horrible convulsions attendant upon the dissolution of the social system, there would be no such thing as drawing the line; to avoid, therefore, worse evils, I would allow the 'frightful disparities,' as an able writer of the day terms them, to exist till industry, unchecked, unladen, could work out for itself a gradual emancipation from the

bondage of want. But I would not add to evils I dare not too suddenly remedy ! I would not require the children of Israel to make bricks without straw ! I would not lay the burdens of the state on shoulders already weighed down by nature's demand for daily bread. I would exempt from the whole weight of taxation the labourer, whether of brain or limb ; he has no stake in the stability of the state ; he can carry his head or his hand wherever he goes. He who keeps back the hire of the labourer is denounced in holy writ : I would not be worse than such, and rob the labourer of his hire. I would, therefore, repeal every tax *direct* and *indirect*, which now exists, and substitute for *all* a graduated property-tax, on *independent* property *only*, trifling in amount, say one per cent., where the property was small ; and

doubling, trebling, nay, quadrupling, if necessary, as it rises. What, if a man with thirty thousand per annum, pay twenty thousand, can he not live on ten? or if the man with two hundred thousand per annum, pay one hundred and fifty thousand, can he not live on fifty? This, some people are not ashamed to answer me would be robbing the rich; while they talk as loudly as vaguely of the sacredness of property and vested rights. But I would answer such, that starvation in the midst of plenty, on the plea of the sacredness of justice, is a practical blasphemy! What, therefore, relief from taxation did not effect for the absolutely destitute, I would complete by an amended system of poor-laws;—such assessments, however, to be levied on independent property only."

" Poor-laws are bad things," interrupted Sir

James, who having finished his luncheon, was now lolling on a sofa, "they make the common people so lazy."

"As long as industry is not taxed in support of idleness," answered Henry, "the lazy rich man is entitled to no commiseration for being compelled to assist his brother, the lazy poor man! Poor-laws," he added, turning to Lord Darlingford, "as far at least as food goes, I consider the most sacred of vested rights. God said, 'Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed, to you it shall be for meat.'"

"But you allow," said his lordship, "that many of the great landed properties you would tax thus heavily are purchased with the pro-

duce of the owner's own exertions ; state your reasons for giving immunity to present industry and not to past ?"

" Because," replied Henry, " when once a man has realized property he has acquired a stake in the country, a stake in the stability of the government ; his property requires protection, whether from the foreign enemy or the home depredator ; and, therefore, he should pay for such protection. If a man desires a wall round his garden, who pays for building the wall ? The man who owns the garden ! If a man wishes to insure his premises against fire, who pays the insurance ? The man whose premises are guaranteed. Would either of these persons dream of calling a parish meeting to demand of their neighbours as a right, that they should subscribe towards the expense so incurred ;

say, that every pauper subsisting on some shilling or two per week, should be compelled to pay two-pence for his penny loaf until the sum was made up ; yet, such is the spirit of every tax, direct or indirect, levied on any thing but independent property. The machinery of government is the garden-wall of the landed interest, the insurance office of the fund-holder. Any tax, therefore, levied on those who have neither land nor money is a crying injustice, except, indeed," he added with bitter irony, "we admit of a small pole-tax to keep down burking. It is, no doubt, the houseless, nameless, friendless wretch, who has no one to ask what is become of him ; the poor creature, who has nothing to be protected but the limbs and sinews he was born with, who runs the greatest risk of contributing these to the promotion of science."

"But," observed Lord Darlingsford, "it is not the very destitute who pay taxes."

"I beg your pardon," said Henry, "indirect ones they do. If the beggar in the street succeeds in exciting the compassion of the passenger, and receives one penny, ere he can appease his hunger with a mouthful of bread, do not the corn laws, by doubling the price of the loaf, exact from him one half of the penny so obtained? And is not his mite, thus cast into the treasury, like that of the poor widow in the Gospel, taken from his *want*; and, therefore, more than all they (*the rich*) did cast in of their abundance?"

"Oh, it is all but too true!" said Lady Arden, feelingly. "I do think your scheme of taxation would be but justice. Willoughby would certainly have a great deal to pay; but he can

surely afford it better than poor creatures who have nothing but what they earn, or what they beg. I see the subject now in quite a new light. I have always been in the habit of thinking people *poor* who had but *one* or *two* thousands a-year; and I never took the trouble of considering that there was any difference between hundreds a-year and nothing."

"How would you apportion this property-tax of yours?" asked Lord Darlingford; "and how ensure its being sufficient for the exigencies of the state?"

"On a graduated scale, as I have already said," replied Henry, "from justice to individuals: let those who have the largest property to ensure, pay, as at all other insurance offices, the most; but, as to details and calculations, I leave those to Mr. Hume, or some of the multi-

plication table people ; I only advocate the principle. Indeed, one of the great recommendations of this plan is, that the principle once established, the work is done : when those who tie up the burdens have to carry them, they may be trusted to find scales of sufficient nicety in which to weigh them : we need, in that case, no longer call for estimates, or petition against sinecures ; nay, we may give the very voting of the subsidies to the *Lords* themselves !—many of whom, I make no doubt, would forthwith become immortalised by the economical or '*twopenny halfpenny*' ingenuity, developed in the devising of future budgets. '*Twopence halfpenny*,' I would have the noble lords to know, though no object to them, is a sum which many of their destitute fellow-creatures would, at this moment, receive with joy of heart ! Then, remember, in further

recommendation of this scheme, the millions a-year of unprofitable expense that would be saved to the nation, by having but one instead of innumerable taxes to levy."

"I don't think," said Sir James, looking as if he had made a discovery, "that the people with large fortunes will like this law of yours, Henry."

"Many people, too," replied Henry, contemptuously, "don't like paying their Christmas bills."

Alfred, who had been looking over a morning paper near a window, and from time to time lending a share of his attention to the disputants, now joined them.

"We cannot, I think," he said, "blame any particular government, or set of men, for the ills of which you complain. The fault is in human nature; and the remedy, if there be one,

is only to be found in laying step by step the wisest general restrictions we can on individual selfishness. The advance of civilization has already placed a salutary check on plunder by force; it remains for the march of intellect to discover one for plunder by stratagem. But we must be cautious; in desiring the higher steps of the ladder of wisdom and virtue, we must not undervalue those we have attained, and in our headlong haste, stumble; and, like our neighbours of the continent, fall back on the frightful abyss of anarchy that lays below! 'Tis well to rise in excellence; I hate the cant of dreading all chance: but, to keep to the simile of the ladder, let us take care that the lifting foot be firmly placed on the step above, ere the standing one be removed from the step below."

"Is there not some danger," said Lord Dar-

Jingford, "of a property-tax sending capital out of the kingdom?"

"It must be very easy," replied Henry, "for the inventors of all sorts of protecting duties to devise a means of meeting that difficulty, by some ingeniously arranged tax on the exportation of property, whether income or capital, with a tremendously deterring fine on any attempt at imposition; and minor exactments, to hunt evasion through all its windings. There might, also," he added, "be an alien tax, to prevent the foreign artizan from sharing the immunity from taxation, purchased by our own rich for our own poor."

"Is there not some danger," said Lady Arden, "that the deteriorated incomes of the great, by obliging them to lessen their establishments and expenditure, would throw many people out of

employment, and so increase the numbers of the poor?"

"I should think not," answered Henry; "recollect there would be the same property in the kingdom, only in more general and more equal circulation. The servants dismissed, and the luxuries foregone by the few, would in all probability be more than compensated by the increased establishments and more numerous comforts of the many, though each only in a small degree. The standard of splendour might be lowered, but that of comfort would be raised. The change, too, is likely to be in favour of home productions: the overflow of inordinate wealth, the *too much* of the few, is frequently squandered on luxuries obtained from abroad; while the fertilizing sufficiency, the *enough* of

the many, would probably be expended on comforts produced at home.

"I do not, however," he added, "mean to assume the character of a prophet, or even to argue the point of future consequences; I take higher ground, and end every such discussion with the same appeal to duty:

"Let each generation do what is clearly justice in their own day, and leave the future to the All-wise Disposer of events.

"If there were, indeed, a theory through the mazes of which moral rectitude knew no path, we might be excusable in taking calculation for our guide; but when our road lies before us, indicated by duty's steadily pointing finger, we are not entitled to [balance ere we proceed, even though it should be where four frequented highways meet.

Mrs. Dorothea, the sisters, and Sir James, had got tired of polities, and wandered into the garden. Henry, perceiving that Sir James was still in attendance on Louisa, became impatient, broke off the conversation abruptly, and following them, joined her, saying, "Lord Darlingford is too prudent a politician for me. I hate prudence and calculation, and worldly mindedness," he added, with impetuosity, and a provoked and mortified tone of voice, which Louisa was at no loss to comprehend. "The present artificial state of society," he proceeded, "has banished into the poet's dream every thing worth living for!—there alone all things deserving the ambition of an intellectual being now hold their unreal existence! Beauty has become a snare—feeling a folly, or a curse!—love a farce, and lovely woman, "nature's most cunning

workmanship, a *toy*, a *trinket*, which the rich man may draw out his purse and purchase ! ! !— heart and all !” he subjoined, in an under and somewhat softened voice, for Louisa had looked round, and their eyes had met for a moment. “ Is it so ?” he continued ; “ or are the beautiful looking deceptions now made to suit the *market* for which they are intended, *without hearts* ?”

CHAPTER XIII.

WHETHER Alfred's study was pamphlet, newspaper, or magazine, he could never contrive to discern the print by any light but that of the window, or rather glass door, at which we left him standing on the morning on which he first discerned the fleeting semblance of a fair vision in the adjoining garden. The glass door was generally half open, a muslin blind drawn half down across it, and the eyes of the student, like those of the naughty child in the pictures of bold Harry, just visible over the top of his book.

On such occasions one of his sisters would often glide behind him, and startling him with a loud burlesque sigh, exclaim, "She is not there to-day." "Nonsense!" Alfred would say, rising. "This is a very well written thing," he added one morning, throwing his book on a table.

"What is it about, Alfred?" asked Madeline archly. He took up the book again to examine it before he could answer the question; "I declare he can't tell," she cried, "without looking at the top of the page;" a general burst of laughter followed, from which Alfred escaped into the garden. He had long since made it his business to ascertain that Lady Palliser and her daughter inhabited the next villa; but few, very few indeed, and "far between," had been the glimpses of his beauteous enslaver which his late

studious habits and love of good light had procured for him.

Lady Caroline appeared to be conscious that the garden was exposed to the view of their neighbours, and was therefore timid about entering it; or, when she did so, as on the first occasion noticed, it was only to pluck a flower, for she seemed fearful of remaining in it for a moment. This morning, however, both mother and daughter had appeared on the lawn and with bonnets on, which, combined with the early hour, had caused Alfred to suspect them of an intention of visiting the walks; and his consequent anticipations of a possible meeting, had, we must confess, made him rather absent.

He now called in at the window to his sisters to know if they were not yet ready, assuring

them that the band had played several tunes, and that they would be late.

“Don’t you know that the Duke of Gloucester has arrived?” he continued, “did you not hear the joy bells yesterday evening? He is so punctual to seven, that the fashionables are always early when he is here.”

This remonstrance had the desired effect; final arrangements were quickly completed and the party set forth.

On entering the Montpelier walk, Alfred beheld, quite near and coming towards them, Lady Palliser and her daughter, in company with the duke, and attended by two or three of his grace’s aides-de-camp.

Alfred saw that Lady Caroline perceived and recognized him, for she coloured instantly, but looked as if she did not know whether she

ought to acknowledge him or not ; while he was so much startled and confounded, that he had not presence of mind to look for a recognition. Lady Palliser happened to be conversing with his grace, and did not see him. He passed, therefore, unacknowledged by either lady.

The next turn, the next and the next again, he was determined to manage matters better, and accordingly kept a regular look out for the duke's party, but they were nowhere to be seen ; it was evident they had been going off the walk at the time he met them.

How dull the whole gay scene became the moment this conviction reached him ! How irksome the frivolity of every body's manner ; while all the world, seeming to have made the discovery simultaneously with himself, kept telling each other as they passed that the duke

was gone, just as if it was done on purpose to torment him.

In vain did Miss Salter, every time he encountered the party, address Lady Flamborough by her title, in an unnecessarily loud tone, to endeavour to draw his attention by showing him what exalted company she was in. Every effort was thrown away upon him, as well as all the extra finery sported this day on purpose for the duke. Little did his grace think how many husbands and fathers he had caused to grumble. As for poor Lady Whaleworthy, in her loyal zeal to make herself fit company for royalty, she actually crowned herself with the gold tissue turban which she wore at Mr. Salter's dinner; so that with this and her everlasting crimson velvet pelisse, to which she had added a gold waist-band for the occasion, she was altogether as

ought to acknowledge him or not ; while he was so much startled and confounded, that he had not presence of mind to look for a recognition. Lady Palliser happened to be conversing with his grace, and did not see him. He passed, therefore, unacknowledged by either lady.

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fine as the hammer cloth of a lord mayor's coach.

Lady Flamborough trusted more to her natural attractions ; these she displayed for the great occasion with a liberality which certainly did succeed in calling forth a remark from his grace, though by no means a complimentary

The new bonnets sported this morning would require the calculating boy to count them ; and as for shoes, many a simple-hearted girl fresh from the country, submitted to hours of actual torture, in order that the Duke of Gloucester might go back to London convinced that she had very small feet.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE next morning Alfred was on his guard, and watched the first approaches of the duke's party with a palpitating heart.

But, alas ! Lady Palliser, as before, was occupied and saw him not ; while, what was much worse, it was evident that Lady Caroline did see him at a distance, and from that moment kept her eyes fixed on the ground. They passed each other, and he could discern the glow of consciousness steal over her cheek as they did so. Again and again they passed—still without

recognition ; till at length he scarcely ventured to look that way. Lord Darlingford now appeared. He attached himself to Lady Arden's party—Jane in particular. After a turn or two, he apologised for quitting them, saying he must go and speak to Lady Palliser. Alfred, forming a sudden and desperate resolve, at which he often afterwards looked back with astonishment, took his lordship's arm, and accompanied him. The duke had just quitted the walk, and Lady Palliser, quite *désœuvrée*, happened at the moment to be in what she called a humour for being spoken to. She received, therefore, not only Lord Darlingford but Alfred with the utmost graciousness. Caroline, after a timid glance at her mother's countenance, looked round and recognised our hero with a smile that seemed to open to him in an instant the gates

of Paradise. Nay, the Montpelier walk itself became, as by a sudden revelation, the very garden of Eden to his delighted eyes. He was walking next to Caroline—he did not know how he had got there! He was speaking to her—he did not know what he was saying! Her countenance was turned towards him to reply, while the close bonnet which, while it was so turned, hid its loveliness from every eye. It was a slight summer one of simple snowy sarcenet, and though it warded off the glare of the out-door sun-beam, it admitted through its half transparent texture a heavenly kind of light, which at once accurately defined, and seemed a fitting shrine for the perfectly angelic features around which it dwelt: the pure lively red of the lovely moving lip, where all else was so white; the smile of enchantment, exposing to view the pearly teeth; the

delicately pencilled brow ; the large dark eyes, which yet were so soft, so modestly raised, so meek in their expression, that their very lustre seemed that of compassion's tear ere it o'erflows the lid ! Yet did their mild beams make such an unmerciful jumble of all Alfred's ideas, that he was quite sure he must be talking nonsense. But there was no help for it ; if he spoke not, he saw but the fluted outside of the white sarsenet bonnet ; it was necessary to make ceaseless appeals to Caroline's attention, or the graceful head would not be turned towards him ; the lovely eyes would not be raised to his, the beanteous lips, fresh as rose leaves moist with morning dew, would not be parted in reply ; to purchase delights such as these he was compelled to risk his reputation as a sage, and go on without an effort to think. At length, however,

he came to an unlucky pause, and instead of jumping over it, unfortunately began to weigh what subject he should next propound. But, alas ! the precious moments flew past in rapid succession, and, one after another, became absorbed in the gulph of eternity, while our poor hero was still at a stand.

And now strange uneasy sensations began to blend with the dream-like felicity he had hitherto enjoyed, though he was not yet awake to the cause, which was simply this : the band was playing that well known note of dismissal—the national anthem—and anticipations of approaching separation began to steal over his senses. To his surprise and infinite delight, however, Lady Palliser suddenly asked Lord Darlingford and himself, with the prettiest and most petitioning manner possible, to go home with her

party to breakfast. We need scarcely say that Alfred consented; so did Lord Darlingford, though not quite so willingly, for he had intended to return to Lady Arden's party.

After this morning, Alfred not only joined his new friends whenever they appeared, but became in a short time almost a daily visitor at Jessamine bower; and apparently with the entire approbation of Lady Palliser. Indeed, it was in general some message or some commission of her ladyship's, or some allusion to the morrow made at parting, almost amounting to an appointment, which furnished him with an excuse for calling. He, poor fellow, was flattered, delighted, filled with hope and joy! But, alas! he was not sufficiently acquainted with the character of Lady Palliser to understand his own position. Her ladyship was a being with-

out affections and without occupation; who in her intercourse with others, and from total heartlessness, cared not whose best feelings were the springs of the puppet-show, so the movements of the puppets amused her—and he happened to be the whim of the hour;—to order him about, to see him perfectly at her disposal, chanced to be what, just then, afforded a species of excitement to her restless idleness and morbid selfishness.

CHAPTER XV.

MEANWHILE much of Caroline's excessive reserve, or rather fearfulness of manner wore off. In her mother's immediate presence indeed she was ever the same ; but if Lady Palliser quitted the room for a moment, or was occupied conversing with some other visitor, Caroline's countenance would brighten, and her manner become comparatively easy and happy. Fully, however, to comprehend our heroine, it will be necessary to cast a retrospective glance over the manner of her education.

The most painful silence of the heart and all its best affections had from infancy been habitual to Caroline. She was an only child, and had no recollection of her father; while her mother's strange, unfeeling character, had made her from the very first shrink within herself. When arrived at an age at which young people, not self-opinionated, naturally wish to ask those older than themselves what they ought to do on various little occasions, which seem to them important from their novelty, poor Caroline would sometimes, in what she deemed a case of urgency, make a great effort and apply to her mother, on which Lady Palliser would treat her simplicity as the best of good jokes, laugh to excess, then rally her for blushing, and next perhaps for shedding tears; and, finally, either leave her question without reply,

or give one turning the subject into absolute ridicule; till at last Caroline learned to feel a terror surpassing description of having any one thought, feeling, or opinion even guessed at by her mother. Yet her mother was her only companion. There was also a strange inconsistency in the character and conduct of Lady Palliser; for while she never condescended to advise, she was tyrannical in her commands, exacting implicit, unquestioned, instantaneous obedience to every whim.

Either there was something in the thorough kindness of Alfred's disposition which appeared in his manner, and secretly won the confidence of our heroine; or fate had ordained that they were to love each other. Whatever the cause, the consequence was, that Caroline, after the intimacy we have

described had subsisted for some weeks, no longer felt alone in the world—she was no longer without thoughts that gave her pleasure; while those thoughts, though for their ostensible object they had a walk, a song, a book, or a flower, were always associated with the idea of Alfred—of something that he had said—or some little kind service he had performed—or, perhaps, some chance encounter of his eye—or the consciousness of his fixed gaze, felt without daring to look up, and which, though it had produced strange confusion of ideas at the time, was remembered with delight. Neither was she any longer without hope, though but a hope that they might meet on the walks, or that he might come in about something she had heard her mother mention to him.

It may be asked why should Caroline not al-

ways have had the hopes with which most young people enter life; merely because the buoyancy of youth had been pressed down, and the elasticity of its spirits destroyed, by the unnatural restraint under which every thought and feeling had been held during the period that her earliest affections had, as is generally the case, endeavoured to fix themselves on her parent.

As for Alfred, he had misgivings certainly, respecting his being a younger brother, and his consequent want of fortune. At the same time, when he felt that he was justified in harbouring the restless, delightful hope, that he was already not quite indifferent to Caroline, and that he received such decided encouragement as he did from her mother, what could he think, but that he was the most fortunate fellow in existence, and that he had met with the most

generous, liberal minded, delightful people in the whole world !

Sometimes, indeed, he would take a fastidious fit, and murmur a little in his heart against fate, for compelling him to be the one to receive, and denying him the pride and pleasure of bestowing ; but so absorbing was his passion for Caroline, that he soon closed his eyes against this objection, almost as absolutely as he would have done against the contrary had it existed. He was incapable, in short, at the time, of weighing any subject deliberately : a look, a smile, or the unbidden brightening of Caroline's countenance when they met, would have been sufficient to have upset the firmest resolves, had he even been visited by a lucid interval in which to have formed them ; but on the contrary, from the first morning he had been so unexpectedly

invited home by Lady Palliser, his head had become giddy with rapture ; the pulsations of his heart had never settled down to their steady original pace, nor had any one thought or feeling ever once been summoned before the bar of reason. That it must be a fairy tale—a dream—too much happiness to be true, would sometimes cross his imagination for a moment, and strike his heart with a sort of panic ; but such thoughts not being agreeable enough to meet with a welcome within, were therefore quickly dismissed.

Whenever he was neither at Lady Palliser's nor at his old post at the window, he was wandering in some unfrequented walk, or reclining listlessly on a remote sofa in a deep reverie, calling to mind looks, smiles, or half uttered re-

plies, from which, while they said nothing, every thing might be inferred.

He studied and learned to comprehend as a language hitherto unknown, the timid, shrinking, as yet undeveloped character of Caroline. To him her very silence now conveyed more than the eloquence of others; and however long he watched the downcast lid, if it was raised at last but for a second, he was amply rewarded.

And when he repaired to Jessamine Bower, to pay his now daily morning visit, and on entering addressed Lady Palliser first, as he made a point of doing, he literally trembled with concealed emotion as he noted the slight tinge, faint as the reflection from a rose leaf, steal over Caroline's delicate cheek, while she continued to bend over her employment, whatever it might be, and acting her part unnecessarily well, en-

devoured to betray no consciousness of his presence, till her attention was absolutely claimed by some such formal address as—

"How is Lady Caroline this morning?" Formal as were the words, the tone of the voice was sufficient. The faint tinge would increase to a deep blush, ere the equally formed reply was articulated. On many occasions, Alfred would continue to converse with Lady Palliser, or perform any of her frivolous and whimsical commands, and nothing more apparently would pass between the young people; yet would he, the while, trace in slight variations of countenance, imperceptible to any other eye, all that Caroline thought or felt with regard to what was said. Sometimes Lady Palliser herself would suddenly fling down her netting or knotting, or

whatever nonsense she was about, with an expression of disgust, declare she was sick of it, and ordering Alfred to look for her pet book of Italian Trios, and Caroline to put away her drawing and join them, seat herself at the instrument.

This to Caroline and Alfred was a wonderful improvement of position. Standing together behind Lady Palliser's chair, their voices united in the thrilling harmonies of the music, and sometimes in the utterance of words expressive of thoughts, which else one at least of the voices had never dared to pronounce. On one of these favourable occasions a circumstance occurred, trivial in the extreme, yet which forwarded Alfred's cause amazingly, and indeed conveyed to both a tacit conviction] of each other's attachment.

A hand of each while they sang rested on the back of Lady Palliser's chair, and after a simultaneous attempt to turn over the leaf of the music-book, accidentally came in contact as they returned to their former position. It had been long ere a modest younger brother, like our poor hero, had found courage to possess himself by [any direct means of the fair, soft, taper fingered, rosy palmed, little hand, of the great heiress, the beautiful Lady Caroline Montague ; but an occasion like this was not to be resisted : Alfred's trembling fingers closed upon the fond treasure ; while a hasty but faint effort of Caroline's to withdraw it, was met by a beseeching look that seemed to have the desired effect ; for, though covered with blushes, she did not immediately succeed in disengaging the hand, while the little scene was at the

moment supplied by the duet with appropriate words



Sang Alfred, while Caroline in faltering notes replied



When our hero had taken his departure
Caroline hastened to her own apartment. She
felt unfit for any society, particularly her
mother's.

Her pure unpractised delicacy of mind caused

her to look back on the incident which had just passed as an event of the utmost importance; as, in short, not only a proposal, but also an acceptance. Nay, had she wished it, she would no longer have thought herself at liberty to retract; for she knew that she would not have allowed a man who was indifferent to her to have retained her hand in his for a single second. That she had permitted Alfred then to do so, she felt amounted to a confession of preference! Deep was the blush which accompanied this thought.

At other times Lady Palliser would be extravagantly late in the morning; and, if consequently not in the drawing-room when our hero called, she would send word that Mr. Arden was not to go away till she came down;

and then so whimsical were all her movements, not perhaps make her appearance for an hour, or possibly two. Those were the occasions on which Alfred best succeeded in drawing Caroline into easy and familiar conversation, and thus inducing in her a feeling of confidence towards himself, which a young creature who had been blessed with any friend in her own family, would not have thought of mingling with her love for a lover: but the affection poor Caroline was beginning to feel towards Alfred was not only her *First Love*, but it was also the first friendship her heart had ever been encouraged to know. Thus it was, that to a being hitherto so totally alone in the world, he became in so short a time every thing. While the idea, however vaguely entertained, of being at some period of the future of existence protected by

his affection from every harshness—sheltered by his tenderness from every sorrow, had almost unconsciously became the hope, the home, the resting place of all her anticipations.

CHAPTER XVI.

"But how are you to ask us to the wedding, Alfred, considering we don't even visit?" said Louisa one morning to her brother, who stood as usual at the window, but now without even the pretext of a book.

"Nonsense, Louisa!" he replied. "Wedding, indeed! I wish it were come to that! and it would be easy to arrange the visiting. By-the-by, ma'am," he added, turning to his mother, "independent of Louisa's jesting, I wish we did visit."

"So do I, my dear," replied Lady Arden, but Lady Palliser, of the two, was here rather before I was; besides she is a person of the highest rank, so that I think the first advances ought to come from her. They say too, her ladyship is going to give a great fancy ball, and it would look as if I wanted to have the girls asked. However, I should suppose we must visit soon, one way or other; for Louisa's jesting as you call it, appears to me to go on in as serious a manner as you could desire."

"Oh—I—a—don't know, ma'am," said Alfred, colouring, and pulling off and on an unfortunate glove, which seemed destined to be martyred in the cause.

"Why certainly," persisted Lady Arden, "neither Lady Caroline, nor her mother for her, would be justified in receiving either your public

attentions or your daily visits in the manner they do, if they meant to make the only objection which could be made to you--your being a younger son."

"Well—I hope you may be right, ma'am ;" said Alfred, laughing, and escaping into the garden to hide his confusion.

"He will be a fortunate young man if he gets Lady Caroline Montague," said Aunt Dorothea.

"Not more fortunate than he deserves, Mrs. Dorothea," replied Lady Arden, "for he is the best creature in the world, as well as the handsomest and the most agreeable."

"No one can be more sensible of my nephew's merits than I am," said Mrs. Dorothea ; "but I still maintain that few, even of the few who deserve as well, are as fortunate. Lady Caroline

Montague, I understand, inherits the whole of the family estates, and her son, should she have one, will I suppose have the title."

"Why, no doubt she could command any match," replied Lady Arden; "'tis however a most fortunate circumstance that Lady Palliser has the good sense to see the advantage of her daughter marrying so thoroughly amiable a young man, who will make her so truly happy."

"Talking of happiness," said Mrs. Dorothea, "I hope poor Jane may be happy with Lord Darlingford."

"I trust she will," replied Lady Arden, with a half suppressed sigh; "and in point both of rank and fortune you know it is a most desirable match."

"No doubt of it," rejoined Mrs. Dorothea,

"and people are very foolish who neglect such serious considerations, and allow their time to glide by them. Were I, at this moment, as I might have been but for my own folly, Countess Dowager of Ravencroft;" and here Mrs. Dorothea drew up her head with great stiffness, "such people as the Salters would never have had it in their power to insult me; nor should I have been in danger of losing my life by being baked to death in that horrid lodging. To be sure the carpet looked respectable, and that was all it had to recommend it."

"By-the-by," said her ladyship, "I have often wondered, Mrs. Arden, how you, who have in general a very proper sense of your own dignity, came to make the acquaintance of such people as those Salts, was it you called them?"

"Your ladyship's remark is very just," replied Mrs. Dorothea, "but the old friend from whom they brought me a letter, is a highly respectable and gentlemanly man, and I was not aware till lately that he had only made their acquaintance himself casually at a boarding-house, where it seems they persecuted him with attentions, and then worried him for a letter to some one at Cheltenham, where they said they were going perfect strangers. He was afraid to enter into those particulars in the note he sent by them, lest they should contrive to open and read it: and the letter he since wrote me to say how little he himself knew of them, and to apologize for the liberty he had taken, by explaining that they made such a point of his giving them a line to some friend, that he did not know how to refuse, was unfortunately de-

layed, waiting for a frank (he knows I don't like postages), till with my usual silly goodnature I had taken a great deal of trouble about those worthless people. Their vulgarity too disgusted me all the time; yet they so overwhelmed me with their thanks, their gratitude, as they called it, that I literally did not know how to shake them off."

"Really my dear madam," said Lady Arden, "you are quite too goodnatured."

"That has always been my weak point," replied Mrs. Dorothea: "when I see that it is in my power to serve people, I am fool enough to fancy that alone gives them a claim upon me."

And such was really the case, for poor Mrs. Dorothea, though she had been all her life threatening to grow wise, in other words selfish,

had never yet attained to any degree of proficiency in this art of self-defence, if we may so term it. Too great goodnature was indeed her only apology for being still at fifty-five, what people of the world emphatically call young ! For she had not been all her days blinded by the dazzling sunshine of unclouded prosperity ; on the contrary, her horizon had been frequently overshadowed by those unfavourable changes, from which, as variableness of weather teaches the sailor seafanship, knowledge of the world is in general collected.

" But we were speaking of Jane," proceeded Mrs. Dorothea, " I have not the least doubt of my niece's good sense. Indeed Jane is a sweet girl, as amiable as sensible. I was only afraid that Lord Darlingford had rather a jealous temper."

“ I hope not ! ” her ladyship replied, again sighing, “ and you know, my dear Mrs. Arden, the impossibility of having every thing one’s own way in this world. The connection, establishment, and all that, are in the highest degree desirable. And then between ourselves, Lord Nelthorpe has not behaved very well to poor Jane.”

“ In that respect, it is so far fortunate,” said Mrs. Dorothea, “ that she is now making a still higher connection. And then Sir James, with his fifteen thousand per annum, will certainly be a splendid match for Louisa ; but she must mind what she is about, and not laugh at him as she now does after they are married.”

“ Of course she will have too much good sense for that,” replied Lady Arden ; but her eyes filled with silent tears as she thought of the

infinite sacrifice Louisa would make, if she did indeed marry Sir James.

The three sisters had followed Alfred into the garden, and were collecting flowers to supply the vases in the drawing-room, and laughing in their usual light-hearted way, if but a blossom fell to the ground instead of into the basket held out to catch it. Caroline the while was standing in her mother's drawing-room, behind a Venetian blind, through which unseen she was observing their movements, and envying their happiness, which to her appeared to be satisfactorily accounted for by Alfred's being their brother. How fervently did she wish at the moment that she too were his sister, were it but that she might be privileged to go out and join the cheerful group, on which she thus wistfully gazed.

With her solitary musing, however, a thrill pleasure mingled, when from time to time she saw Alfred steal a glance of interest at the very window where she stood ; and which, from the blind being down, he suspected was occupied by Caroline.

The Arden girls, at the moment, were all occupied plucking blossoms from various parts of a long trailing branch of woodbine, which as it hung from above their heads, it cost them an effort to reach.

"Look, look ! Caroline," cried Lady Palliser, who was standing at another window, "how like they are to the drawings of the graces. I must go and see Lady Arden directly, and send them all cards ; for I am determined to have those three nice girls to do the graces at my fancy ball."

Out of this mere whim of Lady Palliser's arose a visiting acquaintance with the Ardens.

Alfred and Caroline were, therefore, more than ever together, a consequence which Lady Palliser made no effort whatever to prevent. The fact was that her ladyship was in the habit of considering Caroline, who was but seventeen, a mere child; while her own excessive vanity, and Alfred's unremitting efforts to make himself agreeable to her for Caroline's sake, had completely deceived her into a belief that he was under the dominion of one of those absurd boy passions, which very young men sometimes conceive for women much older than themselves; particularly if they happened to be, as her ladyship well knew she was, still extremely beautiful. And though Lady Palliser was too proud and too cold to have the most remote idea of

making a fool of herself, she looked forward to seeing our hero in despair at her feet as to the *denouement* of an excellent jest ; while in the meantime she amused herself by drawing him on to commit every absurdity she could devise. And such, no doubt, if meant as attentions to herself, would have been many humble assiduities, which, for Caroline's sake, he willingly paid her ladyship.

During the progress of this amiable proceeding, the honest-hearted Alfred received every symptom of kindness of manner, as an indication of maternal feeling, and as a proof that Lady Palliser already considered him her future son-in-law.

One evening they happened to be alone, when he was about to take his departure ; her ladyship, on bidding him good night, held towards him

her beautiful white hand in a very coquettish, but, as he thought, in the most frank, obliging manner possible. The idea struck him, that considering his comparative want of fortune, it might be more honourable in him to make some disclosure of the state of his feelings to Lady Palliser, previously to addressing Caroline herself; accordingly, in a paroxysm of grateful and dutiful affection, he seized her ladyship's proffered hand, respectfully pressed it to his lips, and began to murmur something about his own unworthiness. Lady Palliser, snatching her hand away, laughed and said, "Go, you foolish child."

Alfred, thus discouraged for the moment, took his departure in silence, with some idea that Lady Palliser, however kindly and liberally disposed towards his humble pretensions, very possibly thought both Caroline and

himself too young at present. What else could she mean by calling him a foolish child? Little did he dream of the construction put on his manner by his intended mother-in-law.

As little had he suspected on former occasions, that her ladyship had believed him to be making a complete fool of himself, and had been in proportion well amused, when, in conversation with her, while every word was intended for the ear of our heroine, who sat silently by at her drawing, he had ventured on topics, which when alone with Caroline he dared not introduce; and eloquently painted his idea of an ardent, genuine, and worthy attachment, and the devotion of a whole life consequent upon it till he had became breathless with agitation: yet, seeing that Lady Palliser only smiled at the uncontrollable warmth which quite carried him

away, he believed that he was tacitly approved of, and so thoroughly understood, that explanation, whenever the proper time for it should arrive, would be merely matter of form.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE triumphs of Aunt Dorothea over all her enemies, particularly the Salters, were so numerous, that to avoid prolixity we have not recounted them. As for Miss Salter, she had brought on a most inconvenient pain in the back of her neck by the reiterated bows with which she had again and again, morning after morning, vainly endeavoured to draw the attention of Mrs. Dorothea Arden.

One day, however, when that lady was driving up and down the High-street, seated at her

ease in her sister, Lady Arden's peculiarly splendid open barouche, she beheld, trudging along the flag-way and coming towards her, Mr. and the Misses Salter, with countenances which betrayed that they were not insensible to the heat of the weather; and shoes so assimilated by dust to the dust on which they trod, as to be nearly invisible. Mrs. Dorothea was not aware that the Salters had ever before seen her in this elegant carriage: so anxious was she therefore that they should do so now, that on the impulse of the moment, in defiance of having long since given them the cut direct, she made an almost involuntary, yet very conspicuous bow. Electrified and delighted, the whole party stopped short and performed no less than three bows each in return; while Miss Salter, who had by much the greatest

portion of moral courage of the whole trio, added even a kiss of the hand.

Miss Dorothea had not been long returned home when she received a card of invitation from the Misses Salter to a quadrille party, accompanied by a long servile note, to say that they were much concerned at not having had earlier it in their power to offer some attention to her friends, Lady Arden and family, and also to her friend Lady Palliser, and begging to know if their waiting upon, and sending cards of invitation to these respective ladies would be agreeable.

To this was added a hint, that indeed the party was in a great measure made for her friends and would be *very select*.

To the invitation for herself, Mrs. Dorothea sent a formal rejection, without assigning any

reason. Of the absurd and forward proffer of attention to her friends she took no notice.

Nor were those dignified proceedings the sole mode of vengeance practised by Mrs. Dorothea against her pitiful foes; for much as she was herself engaged at present with more agreeable occupations, she had placed the affair from the commencement in such able hands, namely, those of her prime minister, Sarah, that no circumstance, however minute, had been lost sight of.

The origin of the Salters, by its coarsest appellation, had been diligently disseminated in every servant's hall, and thence arisen to the respective dining and drawing-rooms, till it had reached the ears of many, who else had never known that there were such people in existence as the Salters.

What was if possible worse, Sir William Orm's servant in particular had been put on his guard about the deception practised on him by Mrs. Johnson, respecting the young ladies' fortunes; on which Sir William had without the slightest ceremony cut the connexion altogether. He never called or even left a card; he never joined them any where, and as to the bows he gave them in return for those they made to him from a mile off, they were really, except to persons in desperate circumstances, not worth having.

Sir James, it may be remembered, had deserted on the very first morning he had encountered Louisa Arden; so that disconsolate indeed were now the pair who had so lately congratulated themselves on having two baronets for their lovers.

Their *select* acquaintance too, the Shawbridges and Whaleworthys, began to play fine; for in a watering place a title is a title, whether got by accident or by cheese, and though both beef and cheese, like all other necessaries, are sad vulgar things, experience had taught even the innocent hearted Lady Whaleworthy, that with a certain class, and she poor woman dreamed of no better, a title could cover a multitude of *cheeses*.

Not so, alas, with the Misses Salter's *family secret*, which seemed for the present to have abolished all variety of diet, for (crying injustice!) while scarcely any body would visit Mr. Salter, Mr. Salter's beef was, to quote Sarah's polite pun, "in every body's mouth!"

People could not even propound the flattering probability of his having amassed a large

fortune without some one more witty than elegant adding the characteristic remark, that while salting his beef it was supposed he had taken care to save his bacon.

To complete the unfortunate position of the family, Mr. Salter had unluckily found it necessary of late, in consequence of an aggravation of his old complaint of the eyelids, to wear, protruding from beneath the brim of his white hat, a *green* silk shade, which gave occasion to the idlers on the Mountpelier-walk, green being the well known colour of disappointment, to assert that he had done so in consequence of the cruel desertion of Lady Flamborough, who had, simultaneously with the appearance of the said badge of despair, jilted him for a half-pay lieutenant; a gentleman who having received a hint to retire

from the service of his Majesty, for reasons best known to himself and his brother officers, had come to Cheltenham to devote himself to the service of the ladies.

Nor had poor Mr. Salter, while dragged every day to the walks by his daughters, who now had no one else to walk with, a chance of forgetting his fair deceiver; for there she was to be seen morning and evening as gaily *undressed* as ever, flaunting away and smiling and languishing as usual; her white ostrich feathers too, at the highly improper instigation of the breezes, mingling from time to time with the bright red whiskers of the ci-devant lieutenant; while she, ungrateful woman, had the barbarity to pass poor Mr. Salter again and again, without so much as a recognition. "And that after," as he himself remarked,

"having had the face to eat his good dinners;" the remembrance of the cost of which now added bitterness to the thoughts of slighted love.

This was the morning too of the very day, or rather evening, fixed for Lady Palliser's fancy ball, with the expectation of which the whole town was ringing. Even the walks were thinned by its prospective influence, or rather picked of fashionables; for those who were to be there, were keeping themselves up, that they might be quite fresh for an occasion to which the very capriciousness of her ladyship's character had lent, in anticipation at least, a more than common interest.

The Misses Salter, after weighing for two or three turns the poor chance which sad experience had taught them there was of their picking up a

beau of any kind, against the certain disgrace of showing by their wretchedness of fatigue that they were not to be among the *élite* of the evening, decided on going home to their breakfast, which social meal commenced in a sulk and ended in a storm.

Miss Grace began again about the improvidence of cutting Mrs. Dorothea in the premature manner they had done. "And it was all your fault, Eliza," she continued, "that insolent temper of yours is always longing so for an opportunity to break out; and yet there is nobody that can sneak and cringe in the mean fawning manner that you can when you think there is any thing to be got by a person. If my advice had been taken, we would have been acquainted with all these genteel people, and

going to this ball to-night, no doubt. To do Mrs. Dorothea justice, she was quite indefatigable in her kindness, and in getting people to call on us and invite us as long as we showed her any kind of gratitude; so we have ourselves to thank, or rather you for it all."

"Your advice indeed, you fool!" was all Miss Salter could find to say; having, as she could not help knowing, the worst of the argument.

"It all comes of *pride*, and upstartishness, and nonsense," said Mr. Salter. "Grace, the girl, however, is so far right; Mrs. Dorothea Arden is a very worthy gentlewoman, and showed us a great deal more civility than in our station of life we had any right to look for; and it certainly was our place to be very

grateful for it, and if we have not been so it is no fault of mine; I knew nothing of the carryings on of you Misses with your boarding-school breeding forsooth."

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN consequence of the expected ball in the evening, neither the Palliser nor Arden party had been at the walks in the morning. But soon after breakfast Alfred called at Lady Palliser's with his usual offering of sweets.

Caroline had just entered the drawing-room, and was proceeding towards a conservatory at its further extremity, when the appearance of Alfred arrested her steps.

He assisted her in arranging the flowers he had brought, and in selecting from them the

savouried few she was to wear herself. This task drew from him some playful remark, more love-like than rational, on the good fortune of the happy blossoms thus chosen.

Lady Palliser had been particularly harsh that morning about some trifle, and Caroline was consequently in very bad spirits.

"Why should it be good fortune to be chosen by me," she said, "when I am myself the most unfortunate of beings? The poor flowers that I choose," she added with a faint effort to laugh, fearful she had said too much, "will be the first to fade away," quoting Moore's little song.

"Or the young gazelle, with its soft black eye,
If it loved you well would be sure to die,"

proceeded Alfred, humming the air and continuing the quotation; then in a half playful, half

tender whisper, he subjoined, “ The death-warrant of many of whom your ladyship little thinks would be already signed and sealed were this the case.” But perceiving while he spoke that though Caroline tried to smile her lip trembled, he checked himself, and with an altered tone exclaimed, “ I beg a thousand pardons ! You are—you seem—what can have—”

“ Oh, nothing,” she replied, “ only other young people are light-hearted and cheerful together ; there are your sisters for instance, how happy they always seem to be ; and how kind to you all—how indulgent, how affectionate, Lady Arden appears. While I have neither sister, nor brother, and yet my mother”—here checking herself, she added hesitatingly, “ I dare say—it must be my own fault—I suppose I don’t deserve to be loved—but I am

quite sure that—that—my mother does not love me—and oh, if you knew how miserable the thought makes me !”

“ You cannot be serious,” he said.

“ I am indeed !” she replied, looking up with innocent earnestness, while her eyes swam in tears.

Alfred caught her hand, pressed it to his lips, talked incoherently about the impossibility of knowing without loving her, then of his own unworthiness, his presumption, his poverty, his insignificance, &c. &c.; his being in short a younger son; and at length wound up all by making, notwithstanding, a passionate declaration of his love. If affection the most devoted, the most unalterable, had any value in her eyes, affection that would study her every wish, affection such as he was convinced no lover had

ever felt before ; if such affection could in any degree compensate for the absence of every other pretension, such, unable longer to suppress his feeling, he now ventured to lay at her feet.

Caroline trembled and remained silent. He entreated her to speak, to relieve him from the fear that he had offended her past forgiveness by the very mention of his perhaps too daring suit.

" Does—my mother—know ? " she whispered at last, " because—if not—I fear—"

" Lady Palliser I think," he replied, " must know, must understand ; nay, I have ventured to allude slightly to the subject, and have even been presumptuous enough to translate her ladyship's kindly and indulgent admission of my constant visits as, however liberal on her part, a tacit consent to my addresses."

"Oh, I hope you are right!" exclaimed Caroline, with an inadvertent earnestness which called forth from Alfred gratitude the most profuse, expressed, not indeed loudly, but in whispers so tender, so eloquent, that for some moments, Caroline, forgetting every thing but their import, felt a happiness she had never known before. New and delightful prospects of futurity seemed opening before her youthful imagination, hitherto so cruelly depressed. Her countenance, though covered with blushes, and studiously turned away to hide them, so far indicated what was passing within, as to encourage Alfred in adding,

"To-morrow, then, when Lady Palliser may possibly be at home, may I venture to speak to her ladyship on this subject?"

After a short silence, Caroline replied with hesitation,

"Yes—I—suppose—you had better."

But she sighed heavily as she said so, for she dreaded the strange and whimsical temper of Lady Palliser; yet she now found that a feeling of consolation accompanied what had hitherto been her greatest sorrow, the sense of her mother's want of affection; for perhaps, she thought, she may not care enough about me to mind what I do! Here all her efforts at self-possession gave way, and she yielded to a passion of tears.

Alfred had been holding her hand, and anxiously watching her countenance; he became alarmed, and began to suspect, that perhaps she was herself undecided. "What can this

mean?" he cried. " You do not repent of the permission you have given me? Caroline! say you do not! Say I am wrong in this!"

She raised her eyes and moved her lips to reply, when a loud electrifying knock was heard at the hall door. The look however had so far reassured Alfred, that he again pressed her hand to his lips, and repeated with an inquiring tone, " To-morrow, then?" Footsteps were heard in the hall; the drawing-room door opened, and Alfred hastily disappeared, while a servant entering, laid cards on the table and retired.

Caroline was hastening towards the conservatory to take refuge there till her agitation should subside, when the Venetian blind which hung over its entrance was moved aside, and her mother appeared before her, scorn and rage depicted in her countenance.

Our heroine, her footsteps thus unexpectedly arrested, stopped short in the centre of the apartment, and stood trembling from head to foot.

From behind the Venetian blind, Lady Palliser had witnessed the whole of the interview between the lovers.

She was not herself previously aware that the heartless coquetry in which she had been indulging had taken so strong a hold even of her bad feelings; but disappointed vanity was perhaps a mortification she had never known before. She therefore scarcely herself understood the species of rage with which she was now animated; the almost hatred with which she now looked on the perfect loveliness of her blushing, trembling child. Of course, on prudential considerations she would have disap-

proved of the match at any rate; and of this she now made an excuse to herself.

She stepped forward, and when close before Caroline, stamped her foot, uttered an ironical, hysterical laugh, and almost gasping for breath, stood some moments ere she could well articulate.

" You piece of premature impudence!" were the first words she at length pronounced. After pausing again for a moment, she recommenced with a sneer, " So you have made your arrangement. I must congratulate you on Mr. Arden's obliging acceptance of your liberal offer, of heart, hand, and fortune!"

Caroline looked the most innocent astonishment.

" You really do not understand me," proceeded her ladyship, in the same tone of mock-

ery. "Are you then not aware that I have been a witness to the scene which has just passed ? and have, of course, heard your modest ladyship stating to Mr. Arden how much at a loss you were for some one to love you, forsooth ! Barefaced enough, certainly ! Upon which the young man could not in common politeness do less than offer his services. Besides, it was much too good a thing to be rejected ; few younger brothers, and therefore beggars, would refuse the hand of an heiress of your rank and fortune. Go ! you disgrace to your family and sex ; go to your room, and remain there till you have my permission to leave it. As for Mr. Arden, I shall give orders that he is never again admitted beneath this roof. Should you hereafter meet him in society do not dare to recognise him. Go !"

Caroline was moving towards the door, without attempting a reply, well aware that remonstrance or entreaty would be perfectly vain.

"Stay!—I have changed my mind," recommenced her ladyship. "Mr. Arden comes tomorrow, it seems—let him come—I shall not see him. Receive him yourself, reject him yourself, now and for ever! Tell him that on reflection you have repented of your folly; and that the subject must not be even mentioned to me. Let the interview take place in this room—let your rejection be distinct, and let him suppose it comes from yourself. I shall be again in the conservatory—I shall hear and see all that passes; and on your peril, by word or look, say more or less than I have commanded."

Caroline flung herself on her knees, and with clasped hands and streaming eyes looked up in

her mother's face. "Oh, do not, do not," she exclaimed, "ask me to see him, and in all else I will submit!"

Lady Palliser laughed out with malicious irony, saying, "So you offer conditional obedience. Do," she proceeded, frowning fiercely, and extending her clenched hand in the attitude of a fury, "precisely as I have commanded!"

"This evening," continued her ladyship, with affected composure, looking contemptuously down on Caroline, who was sobbing ready to break her heart, "this evening, deport yourself as though nothing had happened: dance as much as usual; and do not dare to have red eyes, or to show the slightest depression of manner. Should Mr. Arden make any allusion to what has occurred this morning, merely tell

him to say nothing more on the subject till to-morrow."

Here Lady Palliser quitted the apartment, while Caroline remained on her knees, overwhelmed by utter despair, and shedding, with all the innocent vehemence of childhood, the large pure tears, which like summer showers fall so abundantly from the eyes of the young in their first sorrow.

The alternative of daring to disobey her harsh and heartless mother never once presented itself to her mind as possible.

CHAPTER XIX.

It was night—arrivals had commenced—the lights, the music, the decorations, the sight and scent of the flowers, all added to the aching of Caroline's temples and the confusion of her ideas, as she stood in a sort of waking dream, conscious only of wretchedness, near the door of the first of the reception rooms, courtesying with a mechanical smile to each new group that appeared. She would have given the world to have been any where else, but this was the post her mother had commanded her to fill.

When the ladies of the Arden party entered, she felt a childish impulse to fling herself into the bosom of Lady Arden, and drawing all the daughters round her, entreat them to hide her from her cruel mother.

Alfred next appeared, accompanied by Sir Willoughby and Mr. Geoffery Arden. The two latter named gentlemen had been expected for some days, but had arrived only about two hours before.

Alfred presented both, and some unmeaning conversation passed about the heat of London, how long they had been on the road, &c. Our hero, the moment he came in, missed the flowers Caroline had promised to wear, and felt disappointed. If she had forgotten them in the hurry of dressing it was no very flattering token of her regard. If, on the other hand, Lady

Palliser had noticed and forbid her wearing them, it was a bad symptom of his ultimate success. He longed for an opportunity of venturing some playful reproach which might lead to an explanation. When his companions moved on a step or two he drew very near, and asked in an emphatic whisper, if the chosen blossoms had faded already. A rush of colour, which the peculiar fairness of Caroline's complexion already described made the more remarkable, covered her cheeks in a moment; but she attempted no reply. After a short and somewhat anxious pause Alfred asked her to dance; she looked up suddenly but vacantly, as if scarcely comprehending what he had said, but still spoke not. He was just about to repeat his words, when Willoughby, who had been conversing with Lady Palliser, turned round and made the

same request. Caroline, glancing towards her mother, and seeing her eye upon her, started, assented quickly, took Willoughby's arm, and walked to the quadrille.

Lady Palliser noted the chagrin of our hero with secret triumph, and suddenly forming one of her usually whimsical and tyrannical resolves, determined, as an appropriate punishment for the lovers, to marry her daughter to Sir Willoughby, whose match in town she had heard it confidently reported was off. Though he was but a baronet, his immense property made it at least an eligible marriage ; and such, little as she cared about Caroline, she had always considered it a necessary part of etiquette some time or other to provide.

That Alfred, however, might ascribe Caroline's change to her own caprice, and be the

more mortified, Lady Palliser took his arm, walked about with him for a considerable time, and treated him with more than her usual cordiality.

It had the desired effect, it threw him into complete despair; he could not now even console himself with the thought that Caroline was acting under the influence of her mother.

When the dancing had ceased, and Caroline was seated with her evidently delighted partner on a distant sofa, Lady Palliser led our hero up to her, and said, "Come, Caroline, I have no notion of giving up old friends for new ones altogether: you must dance one set with poor Alfred; do see how forlorn he looks."

Caroline was utterly confounded: had her mother forgiven them—was she going to relent.

Such happy thoughts, however, were soon

scattered, for Lady Palliser, on pretext of arranging a stray ringlet, drawing very near, whispered, with a menacing frown, "Take care how you behave, and what you say." The frown and whisper destroying as they did the momentary hope, caused Caroline, on taking Alfred's arm, to look so much disappointed that it was impossible not to infer that she would rather have remained on the sofa. Yet Alfred could not bring himself to believe this! he was miserable, however, and did not know what to think; while he was so much occupied forming painful conjectures, that he himself behaved strangely and coldly.

Caroline thought with intense agony of the task she had to perform in the morning, while with a feeling allied to terror she stole from time to time a momentary glance at the features

of him she must so soon mortally offend; to whom she must so soon give apparently just cause to view her henceforward with hatred and contempt. She even fancied that his countenance wore already a severity of expression she had never seen in it before. She bewildered herself too with the thought, that if she could get an opportunity and venture just to whisper, "Mr. Arden, don't mind any thing I am obliged to say to you in the morning," it might prevent his thinking so very very ill of her as he must otherwise do. This sentence she repeated to herself above an hundred times during the quadrille, yet whenever she was going to address it to Alfred, and more than once she moved her lips to begin, she either caught her mother's eye turned upon her, or she fancied it might be, and dared not look to

see lest it should give her a conscious and guilty appearance ; or the impression that Alfred was already displeased became so strong as to deprive her of the courage to speak to him ; besides all which, her heart at each abortive attempt she made to articulate, leaped up into her throat, and by its excessive fluttering quite choked her utterance, till the convenient moment was gone by. On the music ceasing, Lady Palliser came up and took her away, as if in great haste to make some arrangement, yet, in so obliging a manner, and with so many pretty excuses, that Alfred thought her ladyship at least was unchanged.

And so must Caroline, he told himself again and again ; "it can be but fancy on my part, or rather, all that seems strange and altered in her manner must proceed from her extreme

delicacy, her excessive timidity, her consciousness that we now perfectly understand each other's thoughts makes her fearful to meet my eye, at least with others present; makes her afraid that all the world will know the moment they see us together what is passing in our hearts. I can well imagine one so gentle, so young, so fearful, feeling the newness of her situation, almost as though she were already a bride; having listened but this very morning, for the first time in her life, I should suppose favourably, to the accent of a lover."

Alfred had wandered into the conservatory, where, amid the intoxicating odours of ten thousand exotics—pursuing this train of thought—he luxuriated for a time in dream-like meditations on the delicacy, the devotion, the exclusive tenderness, which must necessarily charac-

terise the attachment of a being so pure, so innocent, so unpractised in the world's ways as Caroline—his Caroline ! Yes, he was now entitled to combine with her idea this endearing epithet.

He was standing the while with his arms folded and his eyes unconsciously uplifted to a brilliant lamp, as if lost in contemplation of its brightness.

A change in the music broke his reverie; when his discerning vision passing along a vista of orange trees, found its way into the drawing-room, and fell on a group preparing to waltz. Among these, and occupying the very spot hallowed to memory by the interview of the morning, he beheld Caroline standing with the arm of Willoughby round her slender waist, and her hand resting on his shoulder—a mo-

ment after the couple had launched amid the tide of changing forms; but Alfred's eye still traced them as they floated round and round the prescribed circle, till, what with the moving scene, and his own thoughts of agony, his brain went round also. He had never been able to prevail with Caroline to waltz, her plea of refusal had always been that she did not waltz. Was she then changed in every sentiment—in every opinion—in every feeling! Had she become hardened to the world—lost to personal delicacy—lost to affection—lost to him! What had she—what had she not become! and all within a few short hours.

CHAPTER XX.

In vain had our heroine, when Sir Willoughby had asked her to waltz, pleaded the same excuse alluded to in our last chapter. Lady Paliser, who was near, and heard Sir Willoughby's request, interfered, and commanded compliance; while poor Caroline, who seems to have been born but to be the victim of her mother's caprices, was led away to join the gay circle, trembling and broken-hearted.

The report that Willoughby's marriage had been broken off was quite true: he had written the

account to Alfred a day or two before. The lady had the very day previous to that fixed for the wedding eloped with her former lover ; while Sir Willoughby had found himself, his preparations being all made, in rather an absurd situation.

The newspapers, too, had taken unwarrantable liberties with his name, and made some witty comments on the superior personal attractions of his rival.

His vanity it was which had in the first instance been gratified—his vanity now suffered proportionately. And so irritable was his temper and so depressed his spirits, on his arrival in Cheltenham, that Alfred, who had but just returned from his interview with Caroline, felt that it would be mistimed to mention her, or allude at all at present to his own happier pros-

psects. He limited the confidential conversation, therefore, to kind condolence with his brother, being too delicate to remind Willoughby that he might have escaped this mortification had he taken his advice.

Thus was the foundation unintentionally laid of a concealment which finally led to many disastrous consequences.

The moment Willoughby was introduced to Caroline he was captivated by her beauty. After they had danced together, when our heroine was so unexpectedly desired by her mother to dance with Alfred, Geoffery Arden, who may be termed Willoughby's evil genius, took possession of the seat beside him on the sofa, which had been just vacated by Caroline ; and well knowing his cousin's weak point, said, " Well, that is one of the most pointed things I ever saw."

"To what do you allude?" asked Willoughby.

"Did you not see how mortified her ladyship looked at having her flirtation with you disturbed."

"Flirtation, indeed!" repeated Willoughby, laughing; "the acquaintance is rather short for that, I should think."

"Nay, we hear of love at first sight; and it was certainly something very like it. You were not many minutes in the room when you asked Lady Caroline to dance; and I don't know whether you noticed it, but a moment or two before Alfred, who has been so long acquainted, had made the same request; the lady pretended not to hear: she heard, however, when you spoke, and consented with marked alacrity."

Willoughby's vanity, which had been solately wounded, gladly welcomed suggestions so flat-

tering. To woo and win the young, the beautiful, the rich Lady Caroline Montague, might well silence the jeers of those who were disposed to make impertinent comments on his late disappointment.

As for Geoffery Arden's motive for offering the incense of flattery to Willoughby, it was the same which in most cases governs most men—self-interest. It was by the grossest flattery that he had long since made himself necessary to his cousin; and by the same means he still sought to retain an influence over him, which, in a pecuniary point of view, was particularly convenient to himself. On the present occasion also, he had seen with half a glance sufficient to make him suspect, at least, that Lady Caroline Montague was an object of interest to Alfred. If he was right in his conjecture, the

circumstance might afford a favourable opportunity for sowing the seeds of dissension between the brothers, an object of which he never lost sight, well knowing that his own influence and that of Alfred could never go hand in hand—the one being for evil, the other for good.

Added to this, it was always more or less an object with him to throw obstacles in the way of any love affair of either of the brothers; for though he was not so romantic as to expect by such means to succeed in preserving them both old bachelors, should they reach old age—for such a chance could not be very important to him, who was so much their senior—it was just as well to keep the book of fate open as long as possible. There was no use in increasing the chances against himself. The fewer names, in short, above his own

on the list of even improbable advantages the better.

While the cousins continued to occupy their sofa, and observe the dancers, Geoffery was eloquent in the praises of Caroline's beauty ; quoting, as he well might, many high authorities for her being the acknowledged belle of the late season in town. He knew that weak men, with all their obstinate devotion to their own opinions, unconsciously see with the eyes, hear with the ears, and even speak in the language of others ; and that their love most especially is a mere reflection !

Indeed, to gain an entire ascendancy over weak people only requires a little management ; but unfortunately it is of that uncandid sort which their best friends are the least likely to adopt.

If you say to an ill-governed child, "My dear, you have eaten enough of that cake, give it me, and take this pretty toy to play with." The child says, "No, I won't; it's not a pretty toy," and eats faster than before. But lay down the toy carelessly within his sight, and if he has eaten sufficiently, he will drop his cake on the floor, and fly to seize the toy.

Men and women of weak minds are but children of a larger growth.

When the company had all retired, Lady Palliser thus addressed her daughter: "Your avoiding to dance with Mr. Arden was quite unnecessary. I have no desire that your manners towards him in society should be at all altered: such conduct would draw down remarks which I do not choose should be made. As for to-morrow," continued her ladyship,

"remember that I shall witness the scene; therefore let your obedience be perfect! Also, if you have any regard to decency left, take care that no folly on your part gives Mr. Arden an opportunity of boasting that Lady Caroline Montague, in despite of the impropriety of the alliance, was indelicately ready to fling herself into his arms, if Lady Palliser had not interfered."

Her ladyship here quitted the room; and Caroline, her ideas confused by this new view of the subject, stood transfixed to the spot, till aroused from her reverie by the entrance of servants to extinguish the lights.

She retired, but it may be believed not to rest. She flung herself on her bed without undressing, and wept away the early morning, the brightness of which entering freely through the

shutterless windows of a Cheltenham bed-room, shone with incongruous lustre alike on her glittering ornaments and her falling tears. We speak of morning, because the night, of course, had been over before the ball concluded.

CHAPTER XXI.

ALFRED had no opportunity for private conversation with his brother before he went to his appointment at Lady Palliser's; nor indeed did he now desire it till he should have come to some explanation with Caroline.

In strange perplexity of spirits, trying in vain to persuade himself that he had every thing to hope and nothing to fear, he repaired to Jessamine Bower.

On entering the drawing-room he perceived Caroline, seated and alone. When he was an-

nounced, she did not move. He approached; her eyes still remained fixed on the ground, while the paleness of her complexion was even more remarkable than usual, and a very slight but universal tremor pervaded her whole frame. He stood before her, and as he did so, trembled himself with undefined apprehension.

"Good heavens, Caroline!" he exclaimed, sinking on one knee, and attempting to take her hand. She withdrew it hastily, and her cheeks crimsoned while she cast one involuntary glance in the direction of the conservatory. Alfred rose, folded his arms, and stood for a moment silent, then said—"If I have been presumptuous, Lady Caroline, I have much to plead in my excuse, and the interview of yesterday in particular; I was certainly led to hope for a

"Those tears are not caused by caprice," he said in a tone of tenderness; "in compassion say," he added with sudden and vehement earnestness, "that you are acting in obedience to Lady Palliser's commands, and I too will submit." While speaking again he sank on his knee before her, and tried to take both her hands. The terror however with which she resisted, hastily rising as she did so—the more effectually to avoid him—so much for the moment resembled aversion, that he rose as hastily, and looking his amazement, said with a hysterical intonation of voice, "If it is indeed so, I have a thousand apologies to offer to Lady Caroline Montague for my impudent intrusiveness. To retire, however, and offend no more, will perhaps be better than entering further into the subject." He was about to depart, when pausing he said,

"I will ask one question—Am I rejected? Do you finally withdraw the hopes you yesterday bestowed?"

"I do," she replied.

He stood for a few moments to master his emotion, then pronouncing a haughty good morning, hastily quitted the room and the house. In a few moments after, he was pacing, without plan or intention, one of the many shady and usually quite solitary walks, which branch off in every direction from the general scene of gaiety, and near to which both villas stood.

His pride, as well as every tenderer and worthier feeling, was wounded beyond description. He now appeared, even to himself, in the light of one who had indelicately, unfeelingly, and presumptuously sought a match of worldly advantage, to which he had no pretension; and

though he could acquit himself of interested views in so doing, he felt that it would be a romance and absurdity to expect so candid an interpretation from any one else. The one continued dream, which had made up his whole existence for many weeks past, was now dissipated in an instant. Nay, he sought in vain among his own meditations for the apologies, even to himself, which had before seemed sufficient. Caroline, so silent, so fearful at the commencement of their acquaintance, had seemed to derive a new existence from his growing attentions, while Lady Palliser, instead of checking those attentions, and showing alarm at the visible pleasure with which her daughter received them, had herself given him what he then considered the most unequivocal encouragement, being always the first to make

intercourse easy to both, by desiring the always timid Caroline to dance with him, walk with him, and sing with him. And then the silent glow of secret pleasure with which the welcome command was obeyed, confirmed sometimes perhaps by a momentary expression caught when the eyes accidentally met, or at other times merely by an alacrity of movement, or cheerfulness of tone in obeying or replying, which, notwithstanding, betrayed volumes in a character too fearful and gentle to let itself be regularly read aloud, yet too artless, too unpractised, to know how utterly to seal its pages.

While such things had been, the prejudices of society had faded from his mind ; he had believed it not impossible that where an only child already possessed immense estates, a pa-

rent might prefer the happiness of that child to the unnecessary addition of other estates. Now all the artificial estimates of life and manners, taught by early education, returned in their fullest force, and he thought himself a madman ever to have entertained such an opinion.

He now believed that every one who knew he had had the presumption to pay his addresses to Lady Caroline Montague, would reprobate him and say, that because he was a younger brother, and of course a beggar, he wanted to make his fortune by marrying an heiress. How bitterly did he now regret that he had ever had the rash folly to confess his passion. Yet, so thoroughly disinterested had that passion been, that he had even for the time lost sight of the possibility of being suspected by others of motives of which he was

himself incapable: all that through the happy intoxication of his feelings had presented itself respecting fortune, was a vaguely delightful remembrance that his poverty could never entail any privations on Caroline. What was now to be done? The wretched state of his feelings would have induced him to quit Cheltenham immediately, but wounded pride prompted him to remain; he wished to let Lady Caroline Montague see that her caprices should not govern his conduct; that he could behave with composure in her society—with polite self-possession even towards herself. But in this first moment of just resentment, he knew not the difficulty of the task he courted. He resolved to conceal the whole affair from Willoughby, and if his mother and sisters persisted in making allusion to the subject of his

admiration of Lady Caroline Montague, to assure them gravely that he never meant, in his circumstances, to subject himself to the suspicion of seeking an heiress because she was an heiress.

Having come to so dignified a resolve, he flattered himself for the moment that he was almost composed. Scarcely however had he arrived at this conclusion, than fond memory, more at leisure than it had been during the late angry burst of disappointed passion, began retracing scenes, recalling looks, repeating words, recounting circumstances, till his mind again became a troubled sea, from amidst the breakers of which he beheld, but now with all the aggravated feelings of one sent adrift in a bark without rudder or oar, tantalizing views, but too distant to admit a hope of reaching a smiling

happy shore— a haven of bliss to fancy's eye, which appeared the more perfect now that it was unattainable.

At one time he stopped short, and stood for about ten minutes like an absolute statue, quite unconscious of any outward object. He was asking himself, if it were not still possible that Caroline was acting under the influence of Lady Palliser and if there might not come a time when that influence would cease?

CHAPTER XXII.

No language can paint the utter desolation of poor Caroline's mind; for she was too young, too inexperienced, too much accustomed from infancy, to be the unmurmuring slave of her mother's capricious tyranny to have any thing like a just estimate of her own situation.

Had she ventured to think, which she had never yet done, that when of age she should be her own mistress, she would, as very young people do when they look forward three or four years, have thought the period so remote as to

be scarcely an object of hope ; while she would still have trembled at the thought of venturing at any time, however distant, to disobey her mother, unless indeed she could be quite sure of never seeing her again.

Lady Palliser's plan of government when Caroline was a mere infant, had been a system of terror ; nor had any thing in her subsequent conduct tended to soften that first impression. Frowns and menacing attitudes had been used towards the baby before it could understand words, if when occasionally brought into its mother's presence it had happened to stretch its little hand towards any attractive object. Hours of solitary imprisonment in a dark room had been inflicted on the child, for but a fancied dilatoriness of movement in the execution of a command, till poor Caroline had learned

to start with nervous alarm, and fly with the alacrity of terror at the very sound of her mother's voice ; while it was melancholy to see, during the seemingly willing movement the little innocent face of the child filled with the contradictory expressions of anxiety and dread.

Thus had early associations followed up by constant tyranny, imposed at the dictates of a temper unreasonable, capricious, and unfeeling, taught Caroline to view with a sinking of the heart the very smiles of her mother's countenance, as played off in company ; none of them she knew were intended for her, even when their light, perchance, was turned upon her.

Overweening, all-engrossing vanity, was Lady Palliser's ruling passion ; society therefore in which she could be the object of universal admiration was her only element. Not that she

was what is commonly called a flirt:—she was too haughty—too exacting of general adoration for such a condescension towards any individual in particular; while yet within her hidden thoughts, concealed beneath an appearance of statue-like coldness, she had a secret delight in imagining every man with whom she was acquainted, as much in love with her as he dared to be, and withheld from a declaration of his passion only by her own haughty reserve: nay, so far did she carry this dream of vanity, that she felt more or less of resentment towards every man of her acquaintance who married or attached himself to any other woman.

Such was the person with whom poor Caroline had hitherto spent every domestic hour she could remember. Her home, which had thus never been a happy one, now by con-

trast with the vague hopes in which she had latterly ventured to indulge, presented to her imagination a long perspective of tenfold dreariness. The frowns in private, the artificial smiles in public of her unkind parent, were all that she anticipated in future. Her very youth seemed an aggravation of her misery, for the grave itself, which, in her present exaggerated and hopeless state of feeling, was she believed, the only refuge to which she could look forward, appeared at an immeasurable distance, the path to it stretching before her mind's eye an interminable pilgrimage of weariness.

We do not mean to support these views of the subject as rational or just; but Caroline in experience and knowledge of the world, as well as in chancery phraseology, was still an

infant; even her love had at present something in it of the feelings of the child turning to the kind and gentle, as a refuge from the harshness of the more severe; and with the idea of Alfred was blended thoughts of his sisters and of Lady Arden, and of their happy home—that scene of cheerfulness and general goodwill, which she had latterly enjoyed the privilege of entering without ceremony, and which she had never quitted without regret.

The most severe, however, of all her sufferings was the thought that Alfred must now hate and despise her.

She was shut up in her own apartment weeping bitterly and giving way to a succession of dreary reflections, when she received a summons from her mother to appear in the drawing-room. So much was she accustomed to

obey implicitly that she did not dare to excuse herself.

On descending, she found with Lady Palliser, Sir Willoughby Arden and his cousin Geoffery. Willoughby was turning over new songs and professing himself a great admirer of music ; the true secret of which was that he sang remarkably well himself. After some trivial conversation, he discovered several duets in which he had often taken a part with his sisters, and intreated that Caroline would try one of them. She excused herself on the plea of a headache caused by the music, lights, and late hours of the previous evening ; but Lady Palliser interfering, she was compelled to make a wretched attempt ; the manner spiritless, the voice tremulous and even out of tune. Willoughby's performance, however, was really

good ; he was therefore quite delighted. As the song was being concluded, Lady and the Misses Arden came in, and the latter being prevailed on to assist Willoughby with some more of his favourite duets, the visit was prolonged into quite a morning concert.

When the Ardens were about to take their departure for the avowed purpose of a walk, Lady Palliser insisted on Caroline's accompanying them, saying that the air would take away her headache. Caroline made a faint effort to excuse herself, but in this, as in every thing, was obliged to submit.

They soon met and were joined by Lord Darlingsford and Sir James Lindsey ; and it not being an hour at which any part of the walks was particularly crowded, they wandered

on to where the shade by its coolness was inviting.

Willoughby attached himself entirely to our heroine, with whom he already fancied himself in love. Lord Darlingsford walked soberly beside Jane, who after many relapses of a hope, fainter at each return, had resigned her early dream of first and mutual love, and was now quietly receiving his serious addresses. She had at length brought her mind to anticipate, with a placid sort of happiness, the hope of obtaining for life the companionship and protection of a friend whom she could respect; together with the certainty of securing a perfectly eligible establishment, and thus escaping all those miseries inflicted by the unfeeling world's scorn on the poor and the unprotected;—miseries

against which her mother and her aunt had so often warned her.

Louisa was attended by Sir James, her expected marriage with whom was now the universal theme. She had herself, however, by no means made up her mind ; she could not even approach a decision, her meditations on the subject always ending in a fruitless wish that Henry were the elder brother.

Madeline, who did not happen to have a lover present walked and talked with her cousin Geoffery.

Mrs. Dorothea had been called for as they passed her door ; she was the companion of Lady Arden.

Arranged in the order we have described, our party came suddenly upon Alfred, standing

where we last left him, and having just brought his solitary musings to the final summing up with which we concluded the last chapter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ALFRED could not without an appearance of great singularity avoid joining the party ; he turned, therefore, and making his salutation to Caroline, and what other recognitions were necessary, in as hurried a manner as possible, took the unoccupied side of Madeline. Geoffery saw a good deal, and suspected more. "Where have you been all the morning, Alfred ?" he said. "We have had some delightful music at Lady Palliser's."

"Indeed !" replied our hero.

"Yes," added Willoughby, "Lady Caroline

was so obliging as to try one or two charming duets, in which her ladyship permitted me to attempt a part."

Alfred could scarcely credit that he heard aright—**was it possible!**—could Caroline indeed be so utterly devoid of feeling? What, but a few moments after having driven him from her presence, overwhelmed with despair by her capricious perfidy? However strangely changed, however indifferent she had herself become, had she not even the grace to compassionate the sufferings she had wilfully inflicted? Could she within the very same half hour be in such exuberant spirits that it was necessary to exhaust them by singing for the amusement of her morning visitors? Or was it indeed possible, that young as she was, she had already learned worldly wisdom sufficient to prefer the possessor of the

Arden estates to his landless younger brother? So indeed it would appear. Had she not last night danced with Willoughby in preference to himself?—Had she not afterwards departed from her usual line of conduct to waltz with him also?—This morning, had not every thought and feeling undergone an evident and sudden revolution. That prudential considerations had been strongly represented to Caroline he made no doubt; it was highly improbable that such views had arisen spontaneously in her own mind; but of what value could the merely fanciful preference be that could be so easily turned aside? To believe Caroline worthless cost him a more cruel pang than even the knowledge that she was lost to him for ever.

As soon as the Arden family had reached home, after having left Caroline at Lady Palliser's,

and parted from Lord Darlingford and Sir James at the door, the sisters began as usual to banter Alfred about his love; and Lady Arden observed laughingly, "But you seem to have quite resigned your post to Willoughby." Alfred made a strong effort to treat the subject with seeming carelessness, and replied generally, that younger brothers had no pretensions.

"That is," replied his mother, "as the lady may think. And I am sure Willoughby would be very sorry to interfere with your prospects; an heiress can be no object to him."

Willoughby looked amazed. Alfred begged Lady Arden would not treat the subject with such unnecessary solemnity, and assured his brother, with an earnestness that surprised the ladies of the family, that he had not the most distant intention of ever addressing Lady Car-

line Montague, nor the slightest reason to suppose that if he were guilty of so silly a presumption, his forwardness would not meet with the repulse it should deserve.

"I don't know that," said Geoffery; "it must depend on the share of encouragement a lady pleases to give."

"Lady Caroline Montague," observed Willoughby, "is certainly much to be admired; at the same time," he added, with evident pique, "I should be sorry, were I ever to enter the lists among her ladyship's adorers, to owe my success to being an elder brother, as my mother would infer!"

The girls persisted in laughing, and declaring there must have been a lover's quarrel; for that Alfred did not speak of Lady Caroline in the least like the way he used to do.

"There is certainly a great change," said Mrs. Dorothea; "every thing appeared to be going on just as Alfred's best friends could have wished."

"How busy people make themselves," thought Willoughby, "but they shall not influence my conduct."

To avoid the painful topic, Alfred sauntered into the lawn by one of the open French windows. He was almost instantly followed by Willoughby, who took his arm and walked for some time up and down in silence.

"I wish Alfred you would be candid with me," said Willoughby at last, "I certainly admire Lady Caroline Montague, but mine is the admiration—the acquaintance of a day—an hour. If you are seriously attached, still more, if the attachment is, as my mother and sisters

seem to think, mutual, tell me so honestly, and I am sure you will do me the justice to believe, that had I the vanity to suppose I could succeed in such an attempt, I would be the last being in existence to wish to interfere with your happiness; so far from it, that if fortune is the obstacle, say so, and I will make a settlement on you so splendid, as to leave no room for objection on that head."

Alfred, quite overcome by his brother's generosity, was unable to articulate; he drew Willoughby's arm closer to his side in token of his gratitude, and they walked on a little, till finding themselves sheltered from the immediate view of the windows by a drooping acacia-tree, they paused by a sort of mutual consent, and Alfred, making an effort to master his emotion, said.—"I feel Willoughby, if pos-

sible, more gratitude than if I were about to accept and be made happy by your noble offer. I feel too," he added, hesitating, "that I—owe it to your generous nature to make a confession, which else I had gladly avoided. I—I have been already rejected—rejected not by Lady Palliser on the plea of want of fortune, but by Lady Caroline Montague herself. You are, therefore, of course—free—to—to—" but he could not bring himself to give the palpable form of words to the remainder of the inference.

"Rejected already! and by Lady Caroline herself!" repeated Willoughby. "Thank heaven then, my interference at least can never be alleged. What occurred before my arrival cannot be laid to my charge. This, under whatever circumstances may arise, will be an infinite consolation to my mind.

Alfred did not judge it necessary to correct the slight error in chronology which his brother had made, and a protracted silence followed; at length Willoughby said, "Do you think it probable, Alfred, that you will be induced to renew your addresses?"

"Certainly not!" replied Alfred.

"In that case," said Willoughby, again breaking the silence, "who may or who may not ultimately succeed in making themselves acceptable to Lady Caroline Montague can in no wise affect your happiness?"

"My happiness," replied Alfred, in a strange hurried manner, "is quite irrelevant to the present subject: but I am not, I trust, so selfish as to feel any desire to condemn a lady to a life of celibacy, merely because—but let us lay aside this painful subject; I shall endeavour as

quickly as possible to forget all things connected with it, except, indeed, the feelings of heartfelt gratitude so justly due to you, my dear Willoughby."

While this conversation was passing in the lawn, Geoffery, whom we left in the drawing-room with the ladies of the family, addressed Mrs. Dorothea Arden thus:

"So you really think it will be a match between Alfred and Lady Caroline Montague?"

"I should think so, certainly," replied Mrs. Dorothea; "his attentions have been very marked, and have been received with decided approbation, both by mother and daughter; and I am sure that he is, poor fellow, very sincerely attached."

"We all thought it quite settled," said

Jane. Her sisters echoed nearly the same sentiment.

"There can be no doubt," observed Lady Arden, "that Alfred would have a right to consider himself very ill treated, if any objection to his pretensions were started at this late period."

"There was a great difference, however, last night," said Louisa, "in Lady Caroline's manner."

"And a still greater this morning," added Madeline."

"Your ladyship thinks Alfred attached to Lady Caroline?" asked Geoffrey.

"Unquestionably!" replied Lady Arden. "If the affair should not go on, it will be a very serious disappointment to him, I am convinced."

C. WHITING BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

DILEMMAS OF PRIDE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF FIRST LOVE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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DILEMMAS OF PRIDE.

CHAPTER I.

ALFRED felt a strong and restless desire to absent himself from Cheltenham for a time. What might ultimately occur he saw as a frightful spectre in the distance, and he even strove to keep his mental vision fixed with stern steadiness on the unwelcome image, while he laboured to discipline his mind to generous emotions, and teach it to desire absolutely the happiness of his truly generous brother, without any remaining reference to self, even though Willoughby

should become a serious and a successful admirer of Caroline's. But to witness the early steps, the daily progress towards such a consummation, was what seemed to his imagination impossible to be endured. Caroline's gentle smiles—the privilege of walking beside her on the Montpelier promenade—of sitting near her little work-table in Lady Palliser's drawing-room—of joining his voice to hers in certain duets which he called to mind individually : these had been his own. The dread of seeing them appropriated by another, appeared, in the present disordered state of his mind, to terrify his fancy even more than all the vague and distant views of that irremediable step ; the very despair attending the contemplation of which awed every gentler emotion into stillness ; and produced comparatively, a seeming, if not a salutary

calm. Accordingly he made up his mind to go to town, on the plea of aiding to complete some arrangements then in progress for his promotion. We forgot to mention that our hero held one of those fashionable licences to be shot at, an ornamental commission in the Dragoon Guards. By using the word ornamental, we do not wish to infer that a regiment of Dragoons is not useful in a field of battle; we only mean to say, that in peaceful times like the present, young men go into the Guards more with a view to becoming *ornamental* members of society than useful engines of warfare, and very naturally feel more ambitions to attract the attention of ladies than to repel the enemy.

Alfred set out for town. For several days however, Willoughby continued in a very un-

settled state of mind, avoiding rather than seeking the society of Lady Caroline Montague.

He had always entertained towards Alfred an affection much stronger than, from the strangeness of his temper, was known to any one but himself, or perhaps even to himself. His thoughts were now absorbed and saddened by the remembrance that Alfred was not happy. He felt a fastidious repugnance to draw happiness himself from the same source which had caused, and was still causing his brother pain; and rather than run the risk of aggravating that pain, he doubted whether it would not be better to relinquish at once an acquaintance of only a few days. He almost wished he had gone to town with Alfred; yet town had unpleasant associations for him just then.

For a time, guided by feelings such as we

have described, he almost avoided Caroline; yet a fatality seemed to hang upon him. Though he told himself again and again that she was but the acquaintance of an hour, it seemed as if the matured attachment of Alfred had, by some mysterious tie, by some identity of sympathies existing in nature between the twin brothers, flung its spell, from the first interview, over the heart of Willoughby, as though those more than brothers scarcely enjoyed a divided being, but that the wishes and affections of both were still united by hidden links, which irresistibly propelled them to one object.

The very efforts which Willoughby made not to attach himself to our heroine seemed to invest his feelings with a seriousness, a pathetic tenderness, so strangely mingled with his pity for Alfred, that while he sometimes sat apart,

yet unable to withdraw his gaze from the mild and lovely features of Caroline, his sensations approximated to torture.

Her beauty appeared to him, the more he gazed upon it, Nature's only perfect work. That any one could admire any other style, any other lovely being, seemed to him a thing impossible. His former fancied attachment he now saw to have been indeed but a dream of vanity, and that it had touched any other feeling.

He could not, however, maintain the struggle long ; he soon began to seek for arguments favourable to his wishes. Alfred's love, he told himself, could not bear comparison with his fervour, or he would have persevered longer—he would have renewed his offer again and again. The attachment was not mutual, Caroline having herself rejected him. Such an

attachment then would, in all probability, soon be forgotten ; then why, if he could, make himself acceptable, might he not be happy ? In a little time he arrived at the certainty that Alfred would himself be generous enough to rejoice in his happiness.

Lady Palliser's encouragement was decided. Caroline's indeed was but passive. Geoffery, however, himself believing his cousin's attachment to be a hopeless one, pretended to point out many marks of a hidden preference, which he said could not be mistaken, averring that a cool looker-on was better able to judge than a party interested.

Willoughby, more even than the rest of the world, was liable to being flattered into the belief of what he wished ; he very soon, therefore, gave himself over to a passion which left

him no longer master of any one thought or feeling.

Groffery's motives were such as we have already pointed out. Unsuccessful courtships were at least time lost, while his being the administering medium of flattery and flattering hopes kept up his own influence.

Willoughby, when he wrote to his brother, which he did frequently and kindly, thought there was a delicacy in refraining entirely from any mention of Caroline, or of his own growing admiration; accordingly he did not even allude to the subject.

Three or four letters had been severally received by Alfred, and opened with excessive trepidation, dreading what they might contain; yet when they were concluded and found not to contain even the name of Caroline, the feeling

of momentary relief was followed by one allied to disappointment ; one which was at least an access of the miserable suspense, the restless craving to know something, even the worst, rather than look any longer upon the desolate blank, which, without the slightest variation, each weary day now presented. From the hour he had quitted Cheltenham, and it was now some weeks, he had seemed to himself a being cut off from the past, apart from the present, shut out from the future. It was a state of mind no longer to be endured. Within about half an hour after the receipt of Willoughby's last letter, though it was then about ten o'clock at night, he set out for Cheltenham.

CHAPTER II.

ALFRED arrived at Cheltenham at an early hour in the morning. On repairing to Lady Arden's villa, however, he found that the family had already gone to the walks.

That Caroline was probably there also was his first thought ; his next, that Willoughby perhaps at that very moment walked beside her as her received lover. He certainly dreaded to behold realized the picture his imagination had formed. Yet a strange restless feeling, a

sort of desperation, blended with a faint hope that he might be quite wrong, impelled him to turn his footsteps towards Montpelier.

It chanced that the band which had paused for one of the usual intervals, recommenced just at the moment. It would be utterly impossible to describe the universal thrill which, on hearing the well-known sounds, took possession of Alfred's whole frame, the rush of associations, numerous, various, vivid, yet so cruelly contrasted with his present feelings.

He wandered on, and entering what may be termed *the walk*, beheld close to him, but in the act of turning, Caroline and Lady Palliser, with Willoughby in attendance. He had seen Caroline's countenance for one moment, but none of the party had seen him. Their backs being now towards him he followed within a

few paces, endeavouring to summon resolution for the necessary task of joining and speaking to them.

Willoughby it was evident had no eyes for any object but his fair companion, towards whom he turned and addressed with an eagerness which precluded the possibility of his ever once looking before him, much less over his shoulder. Caroline of course turned her head from time to time towards Willoughby to reply. She wore the memorable close bonnet of white sarsenet which Alfred had thought so becoming. The morning he had first seen her wear it became present to memory, while imagination vividly pourtrayed within its own beautifying sanctuary that vision of loveliness which it now seemed to be the peculiar privilege of another to behold, as once it had

been his, sheltered from the common gaze, and beautiful for him alone.

Lady Arden's party also was close before him, but his agitation, instead of being at all composed by the time he reached the front of the pump-room, was so much increased, that while the ranks of fashion were wheeling to the right or left, to turn down the prescribed limit, he found a convenient screen behind the crimson velvet pelisse of Lady Whaleworthy who chanced to be near, and a moment after, turning off by a cross walk, he made his way home. On the plea to the servant who admitted him, of fatigue after his journey, he sought the shelter of his own apartment; where, while he was supposed to have retired to bed and slept, he sat strengthening and preparing his mind by meditation for a meeting with his

brother, and endeavouring to resolve what should be the tenor of his own conduct.

He had been but a very short time shut into his room, his mind still in much too perturbed a state for society, when he heard the family party coming in below. He could distinguish Willoughby's step cross the hall and hastily ascend the stairs, but he had not yet resolution to admit him; he therefore bolted his door without noise, and remained quite still. He heard Willoughby turn the handle of the lock gently, and after pausing a moment retire. "They have told him of my arrival, and with his wonted kindness, poor fellow, he is impatient to see me," thought Alfred. "And if he is destined," he added, after a pause, "to a better, a brighter lot than mine, shall I wantonly embitter his happiness by allowing

him to perceive that the confirmation of hope to him will be the sealing of despair to me? No, no, I will be more generous, he shall see me firm, collected—if possible cheerful. Nay, that he is happy, surely ought to be, and as surely is, a source of rejoicing to me. Would this admit of a question were his happiness derived from any other source?—Certainly not! What perverted feeling, then, can it be to which I yield?—Selfishness! yes, selfishness the most aimless, the most degraded! For shame! for shame! I must cast it from me and be a man."

As he formed this resolve he rose from his seat and stood erect. After a few seconds he hastily decided on descending to the breakfast-room, lest Willoughby should again seek him; for he felt that he should have more self-command in the full family circle, than were his

heart just at this moment subjected to the probing of his affectionate brother's anxiety in a private interview.

Alfred, too amiable not to be a general favourite, was received by every individual of the party with the most entire cordiality, except, indeed, Geoffery, who had no good will for any one.

Willoughby, by the manner of shaking hands, and a look which accompanied the action, implied a kind and even anxious enquiry into the state of his brother's feelings, which it cost Alfred an effort to parry. He did so, however, though with an air of rather overdone carelessness.

Willoughby, deeply interested in believing him sincere, and himself not a very keen observer, was more than satisfied—he was delighted.

And by the time breakfast was concluded, so well had Alfred, aided by a feverish excitement, acted the part of cheerfulness and even gaiety, that Willoughby now looked forward to the coming evening with unmixed pleasure. It was the one fixed for a splendid ball at Lady Arden's, and Lady Caroline Montague was already engaged to open it with him.

The ball was so far a fortunate circumstance for our hero, for his sisters could think of little else, which prevented their bantering him in the unmerciful manner they might else have done about forsaking his post. Mrs. Dorothea Arden, who after being at the walks with the young people, always breakfasted with the family party, was so anxious on this particular morning to see that meal concluded—having many arrangements to recommend to her nieces,

that she too made but one remark on the painful topic, merely saying, as she rose from table; "Well, I am glad, Alfred, you have returned in time not to allow your beautiful heiress to be run away with. Willoughby has been paying fierce love in that quarter I assure you. However, I should hope that with his ninety thousand a-year of his own, he has no serious intention of interfering with your making so desirable a match."

Mrs. Dorothea had effected her exit by the time she finished her speech, so that fortunately no answer was required. An awkward silence however followed; for though all the ladies had by this time departed in various directions, Geoffery's presence precluded any thing like confidential conversation between the brothers.

By our constant mention of Geoffery, it may

be supposed he lived with the Arden family, and it must be confessed that he found it both convenient and agreeable to do so in a great measure ; he had, however, a nominal home at a hotel. For the last few moments Alfred had yielded to a reverie of no very agreeable nature, the result of which was, a conclusion arrived at with inward dismay : namely, that if he would avoid calling down a universal clamour of remark both upon himself and Lady Caroline, he must continue on friendly, and apparently intimate terms both with Lady Palliser and her daughter, and for this purpose pay to both every polite attention which intimacy claims ; and still more that the exertion, however painful, must be made at once.

Accordingly, with as much ease of manner as he could assume, he proposed to Willoughby

and Geoffery that they should accompany him in a morning visit to Jessamine Bower.

“ I suppose you forgot to ask Mrs. Dorothea’s permission before you fall in love,” murmured Geoffery aside to Willoughby, as they passed out; “ how absurd it is of aunts and mothers to suppose that they are to dictate to young men in these matters ; but women love to hear themselves talk.”

CHAPTER III.

LADY Palliser not being at home, Alfred was spared the trial of this first visit, and felt that the respite, even till evening, was a sensible relief.

Geoffery, after a vain effort to draw Wiloughby to the billiard rooms, repaired thither himself; and the brothers, thus left to each other's society, wandered on into a quiet walk, and naturally fell into confidential conversation.

So well had Alfred hitherto acted his part,

and so successfully did he during this interview conceal his emotions, that Willoughby was gradually led to open his whole heart, to dwell with enthusiasm on his attachment, and even to speak of his hopes. He would not have approached this latter part of the subject had he not at length mistaken Alfred's fortitude for indifference, and persuaded himself that prudential considerations must have been chiefly influential in tempting his brother to seek the hand of Caroline.

“I cannot tell you how happy you have made me, Alfred,” he said, “by returning among us, and in such good spirits. And remember,” he added, “that whenever and wherever you may fix your ultimate choice, it will be my joy to forward your views to the utmost of my power. Whatever settlement the lady’s family shall re-

quire, you may command at my hands; I speak without limit."

Alfred made an evasive, but affectionate and grateful reply.

"That we may be sometimes mistaken in the strength, or rather the reality and consequent durability of our feelings," continued Willoughby, "I am now fully aware from my own experience. I thought myself very sincerely attached to Lady Anne Armadale, and for a short time after her worthless breach of faith, I believed myself quite miserable; yet how deeply am I, in point of fact, indebted to her ladyship for giving me an opportunity of being undeceived before it was too late! You see, my dear Alfred," he added, smiling, and looking round in his brother's face, "that a disappointment is not always an irremediable misfortune." Alfred had

not time to assume cheerfulness of countenance ; and Willoughby sighed as he continued, “ Not always, I say ; for how widely different are my present feelings. I sometimes shudder when I think how little they are within my own control ! Alfred,” he added, suddenly standing still, and laying his hand on his brother’s arm, “ if the hopes to which I have now given up my whole soul prove less than true, I shall—become a madman ! ” he subjoined, after a moment’s pause. “ You can have no idea,” he pursued, “ of the wildness of my thoughts, when I give way to a doubt——” A long silence followed, which Willoughby at length broke by saying, “ I am well aware that suicide is one of the greatest of crimes ; yet without even visible or absolute insanity, I can imagine the balance of the mind being so entirely upset on one all-en-

grossing object, as to render us for the time no longer accountable beings."

"There are cases," replied Alfred, with mournful solemnity, "which certainly require a more than common exertion of fortitude to carry us through the hour of trial. Impulses, however, of a sinful tendency must not only be resisted, but from the first they must be dismissed from our very thoughts; they must not be dwelt upon even to be condemned, lest our minds become, as it were, familiar with crime, and one barrier be thus broken down."

"Fortitude!—reason!" repeated Willoughby. "Alfred," he added, laying both his hands on his brother's shoulders, "I fear I am already in a delirium! I have intoxicating hopes, yet I know not if they are rational; for there are times when I conjure up fears and calculate

chances, till breathless and with beating pulses I could almost rush on self-destruction as a refuge from the mere possibility of ultimate failure!" While uttering the words self-destruction, he looked wildly round for a moment, as if in search of the means.

Alfred was indescribably shocked: the painful surmise which, on less important occasions, had frequently crossed his imagination, now struck him with redoubled force. His sympathy with his brother, mingled as it was with the strange circumstances of his own case, became a sort of agony. "Why should you, my dear Willoughby," he said, "who can command every means of enjoyment this earth has to offer—why should you give way to dreams, so wild, so incoherent? Banish all such thoughts, and let me have at least the happiness of seeing

you happy." An anxious inquiring look was Willoughby's only reply to this. He shrank unconsciously from seeking any unwelcome confession—a selfish feeling, of which he was not aware, secretly urging him to believe without probing too deeply, that Alfred was comparatively indifferent. In silence, therefore, the brothers now bent their steps homewards, Alfred reflecting the while on the peculiar cruelty of his fate; for if a miracle could now be wrought in his favour, and Caroline be restored to him all he had once believed her, his compassion for Willoughby, he felt, would render the remainder of his own life wretched. Yet how did his heart sicken at the thought of the scenes he must witness, the confidences he must hear, the thoughtless railleries he must parry, if he would act successfully the part which he felt it his duty to

was destined to taste; the whom he fondly loved—a brother loved him with the most enthusiasm; in short, in a futurity now becoming unavoidable, he beheld, as it were, the apparatus of torture displayed before him, and felt necessitated to submit himself with almost the stern fortitude of a chief, yielding his limbs to the commands of fate.

No sooner did he enter the room than his sisters began to tease him about the length of his visit; and who had not been admitted, one by one, to see the runaway lover did not deserve to be admitted to the audience: another naked

of Caroline in his absence. Lord Darlingford, who was holding a skein of silk on the extended fingers of both hands for Jane to wind, being unconscious how painful the subject was to Alfred, said that he would not suspect Mr. Arden of conduct so imprudent, for that love-making by proxy was universally acknowledged to be extremely perilous.

Louisa declared that with her the lover who was present was always the favourite. Sir James, who was standing beside her, giggled, and drew a step nearer. An expression of disgust passed over her countenance, which, however, she concealed, by stooping closer to her scrap-book, into which she was writing some passionate lines given her by Henry, of the ardour of whose manner when he last repeated the said lines she was reflecting at the moment.

Jane thought, but did not say, that absence would rather add tenderness to feeling where it did exist; without, however, daring to associate the thought with the idea of one now absent—and who had once been remembered with tenderness—for his marriage with another had some time since appeared in the *Morning Post*.

Madeline, whose heart was free, expressed openly the sentiment Jane had secretly thought, though not without one of those prophetic blushes which will suffuse the cheeks of even disengaged young ladies at the very anticipation of being one time or other in love in their turn.

CHAPTER IV.

GEOFFERY was still at the billiard table, where, with the assistance of Sir William Orm, he was engaged in plucking a new pigeon, no less a personage than the future head of the Salter family.

Mr. John Salter was a vain, vulgar, selfish fool ; in natural clumsiness a caricature of John Bull personified, yet so determined to be French and Frenchified, and so proud of his travels to and through Boulogne, that the young men about the rooms, to whom he af-

farded infinite amusement, called him the Marquis. Sir William Orm, though he had long since cut the other members of the Salter family, sometimes did the young man the honour to win his money ; while Geoffery Arden, and several other fashionables, granted him the privilege of a limited portion of their acquaintance on the same liberal terms. When the Misses Salter, however, saw their brother bow to one gentleman, speak to another, and walk with a third, their drooping hopes naturally revived.

“ Who is that, John ?—Has he much fortune ?—Is he married ?—Could’nt you ask him to dinner some day ?—And who is that ? I never saw you speak to him before.” Such were the questions and comments addressed by the young ladies to their hopeful brother, who never, however, took the trouble of giving them

any satisfaction ; his usual polite reply being, " If I choose to ask him to dinner, I won't wait for your leave you may depend upon it."

" Well," said Miss Salter to her sister, " if we get plenty of men acquaintance through John, we needn't much care about the ladies after all. It's the men we want you know."

" I know that," said Grace, " but I don't know that we shall get them : however we might have had both the ladies and the gentlemen, only for your improper conduct to Mrs. Dorothea. Is'n't this Mr. Arden that John knows, her nephew ; and Sir Willoughby Arden, and the other Mr. Arden both her nephews ? besides, her knowing all the fine people ; why she would have been the very best acquaintance in Cheltenham, if we had only kept her while we had her."

“ Well, I wish you’d keep your temper I know, and not be always harping on that old story.”

“ Temper, indeed ! The less you say on that subject the better ; but for that matter I mean to take your advice and *keep* my temper, as it happens to be one of the best going ; but I recommend you to part with yours as soon as possible, for you can’t exchange it for a worse let me tell you.”

Miss Salter, who had just finished washing her hands, snatched up the basin, flung its contents in her sister’s face, and effecting her retreat during the first consternation of the enemy, said, as she flounced out of the room, “ except I changed it for yours.”

Descending in haste, she encountered her brother, Sir William Orm, and Mr. Geoffrey

Arden in the entrance hall. Astonished, delighted, and covered with smiles, she accompanied them into the drawing room ; ere however they had time to be seated, in rushed Miss Grace, dripping from the shower bath so lately administered by her affectionate sister, and her eyes so blinded by the visitation of soap suds, that, alas, she saw not the strangers ; but having heard her brother's voice as he crossed the hall, she poured forth her bitter complaints, sobbing violently, and relating the particulars of the assault perpetrated by Miss Salter. John laughed rudely—Sir William and Geoffery looked foolish—and Grace, having received a private hint from her sister, wiped her eyes, beheld the gentlemen, and after standing for a moment perfectly aghast, took her departure ; while Miss Salter, in utter confusion, and with

a countenance of the deepest mortification, yet trying to force a laugh, said it was very childish of Grace to take her silly jest amiss.

" You're such a pair of little innocent children, to be sure," said her brother with a sneer.

" Some people have a particular dislike to practical jokes," observed Sir William Orm.

" This is not the entertainment however that I brought my friends home to receive," continued the amiable Mr. John, " So I beg you'll keep your quarrels to yourselves, and order some dinner."

Mr. Salter entering at the moment Miss Salter made her escape, she flew first to the room to which her sister had returned to repair the injured adornments of her person, opened

the door, thrust in her head, grinned a silent defiance, and slamming the door to again, ran down to Mrs. Johnson, to consult in providing a proper entertainment for guests so valuable, or rather so invaluable, as were two fashionable beaux. Hotels and pastry cooks were ordered to be laid under contribution, and no expence spared, let papa scold as he might. In cases of such vital importance, thought Miss Salter, people mustn't stick at trifles. She then ran up stairs again and in breathless haste, with the assistance of a housemaid changed her dress, and throwing on all the gold chains and bracelets she could muster, made her appearance in the drawing-room, looking however, as might have been expected, after so much exertion both mental and corporeal, not quite so cool as she could have

wished. Whether, therefore, it was most to her relief or to her disappointment, when she found the gentlemen too much occupied to perceive her entrance, she was not able to define her feelings with sufficient accuracy to decide, although she had plenty of time for self-examination, having nothing to do during the full hour that dinner was delayed by the necessary additions, but to sit in perfect silence beside her sister on a sofa. The fact was, that the four lords of the creation had got to a rubber at whist and looked as if the slightest interruption would annoy them.

And young ladies, who have neither beauty nor fortune to recommend them, are obliged to be so amiable, that they learn to acquire an anticipative perception of what will be pleasing and soothing to the whims and tempers of those

falsely important personages—bachelors. Alas ! alas ! for the dignity of the poor ladies ! But this is only another of the many evil consequences of the monopoly of property ; for that monopoly being generally vested in the male line, women are early taught that it is only by worshipping some golden calf, in other words some man of fortune, that they can hope to be restored to any participation, either in the comforts of domestic, or in the distinctions of public life. Were there but a little more justice laid in at the foundation of society, surely there would be less occasion for this heartless scramble, so revolting to almost all, while too many of those who were made for better things, find themselves necessitated by circumstances to join the throng, whose every movement and motives they despise ; but as they cannot change the

world, they are compelled to let the world change them ; for tastes and feelings may be outraged, but dinners cannot be dispensed with.

How different an aspect would the world in a very short time present if that offspring of pride and prejudice, the unjust law of primogeniture, were abolished. The slaves of circumstances, whether men or women, would thus, without spoliation or revolution, be gradually emancipated, and the worship of wealth, that most universal and degrading of all idolatries, be put down. The standard of ostentation would be lowered, tis true ; but the sum of human felicity would be increased, not only in a natural proportion, but still more through the medium of that ideal estimate which now poisons the very sources of peace. For then, not only would

the number possessed of comfortable independence be much greater, but all those so blessed would learn (their understandings being no longer warped by invidious comparisons) to know themselves rich and feel themselves happy. Imagine then pride, prejudice, and famine thus banished from the world. Fancy this amended state of things to have existed for some centuries, and the happy generation then in being looking back on the records of our times. Would they believe what they read to be a grave statement of facts? Certainly not! On the contrary, they would be inclined to suppose the whole not only a work of fiction, but the conception of a madman's mind; so extravagant, so far removed from nature and probability would every action appear, so insufficient every motive, the sacrifices of realties to phan-

toms so egregiously inordinate, so hyperbolically absurd, that the feelings and adventures of personages so unlike themselves would find no fellowship with their sympathies. As well might we be expected to feel pious awe when we read of the gross idolatries of the ancient sage or modern savage. When, however, we look back on obsolete absurdities, or abroad on foreign follies, and find that when objects are removed from the artificial atmosphere of interests and habits we can discern them with distinctness, it seems not unreasonable to hope, that our mental vision is in itself perfect, and that therefore when the great luminary truth, which is gradually climbing the intellectual horizon, shall have arrived at its meridian, and dissipated the mists of prejudice, we shall behold with equal distinctness those objects, which lying in and around our

homes and our times more intimately concern our happiness. Were all the world governed by rational, sufficient, and consistent motives, how few, comparatively speaking, would be the ills of life !

The objectors to the just division of paternal inheritance urge that the wellbeing of a state is best secured by the members of the community having as great a stake in the country as possible, and assert that such a division would lessen that now possessed by the heads of families. But is not the heartfelt happiness, the peaceful and joyous prosperity of the many, not only a greater stake than the ostentatious pride of the few, but one much more calculated to rouse when necessary the lion-spirit of national defence ?

To those who would bring forward, as so

many insurmountable objections, the thousand remote evils they think they can foresee, as the probable results of the system we thus advocate, we can only reply, that we do not pretend to understand the difficult science of political economy, we only know that what we recommend is just. Do justice then in all things we would say, not in the pride of opinion but on principle, and let the Allwise Disposer of the fates dispose of the consequences.

CHAPTER V.

At dinner young Salter was vastly liberal of his father's wine, and called loud and often for Champaigne, sparkling bumpers of which had shortly the effect of so raising the spirits of his guests, that they began their usual merciless quizzing of the Marquis, as they styled their younger host; for, holding as they did, all the family in sovereign contempt, the presence of father and sisters was no sort of check. Indeed they rather seemed to expect that their easy familiarity would be received as a compliment by

the whole domestic circle; nor were they far wrong in their calculations. Mr. Salter, honest man, thought that, as he had been at a great expense about his son's education and travels to foreign parts, it was no wonder that his said son should on his return home create a very great sensation. As for the young ladies, they were particularly well pleased; for John's getting so intimate with men of fashion must, they thought, lead to their receiving more or less attention.

“ You import the silk for your own waistcoats, I suppose, Salter ? ” observed Sir William Orm, “ there is nothing like it to be had in this country.”

“ I heard a lady—a lady of title too—say, no later than last night,” chimed in Geoffery, “ that she would give anything for a pair of slippers made out of one of the Marquis’s

waistcoats, they were all so perfectly beautiful."

"She don't mean to go barefooted till she gets them, I hope," replied the polite object of this delicate compliment.

"I suspect," said Sir William, "that it is the Marquis's own beauty which the lady has so associated with the patterns of the silks he wears that she knows not how to separate the ideas."

"Salter is certainly a fortunate fellow," rejoined Geoffery, "the ladies all admire him."

"Confess the truth now, Marquis," cried Sir William; "in round numbers at home and abroad, how many hearts do you think you have broken in your time?"

"I know better than to kiss and tell," answered young Salter conceitedly.

“That chain,” said Geoffry, “which you wear in such graceful festoons, Marquis, must be either Venetian or Maltese, the workmanship is so exquisite. By-the-by, there was a lady last night admiring that too, and wishing so much you would make her a present of it.”

“What,” cried Sir William, “the ladies volunteering to wear his chains? you may well be vain, Marquis.”

“They may volunteer to wear this that get it,” said young Salter, looking down at the chain.

“You are a great fool, John,” observed his father, “hanging money round your neck that way, that’s paying no interest.”

“Pardon me!” interrupted Sir William, “it is interesting to the ladies.”

“He will be able to afford it to be sure,”

continued old Salter, " for which he may thank an industrious father. Why, gentlemen, when I began the world—confound it!" he cried, shoving back his chair violently, " what are you treading on my gouty foot for?"

Miss Salter, who knew too well what was coming, had tried to avert the impending evil by, not it would seem a gentle hint under the table. It had for many years of Mr. Salter's life been his boast that he had earned every shilling of his own fortune. " Any fool might belong to an old family," he would say, " but a man deserved credit, he thought, who could make a new one;" which as we have already hinted he was determined to do, by heaping all his wealth on the noble Marquis. On Mr. Salter's first coming to Cheltenham, however, his daughters had prevailed on him, much

against his will, to be silent on this favourite topic; while they had flourished away from morning till night about family—respectable family—highly respectable family—old family—ancient family; till at length, by dint of retrograde movements, they had arrived, for aught we know, at coming in with the conqueror. But, alas, about this time Lady Flamborough jilted, and Ladies Whaleworthy and Shawbridge cut poor Mr. Salter, and so put him out of humour with all sorts of quality, as he called them, that he derived a species of consolation from suffering the full tide of his old notions to overflow once more both his soul and his conversation. In vain, therefore, was Miss Salter's hint, as well as many subsequent interruptions. "When I began the world," he recommenced, "the young man in

the song who had but one sixpence was better off than I was. My father came by his death in a colliery you see in Cumberland, and left my poor mother with six of us upon the parish. I was big enough at the time, I remember, to lead a cart, so was apprenticed to a farmer, who moving some years after to a farm in Ayrshire, took me with him. There I picked up the knowledge of Scotch farming that afterwards made my fortune, and brought me a wife into the bargain, who, were she living, good woman, wouldn't believe her own eyes, that that there fine gentleman, and these here fine ladies were her own born children! Look here to be sure," he continued, pointing to Miss Salter's ornaments, "such chains, and rings, and bracelets, and nonsense; and if you'll believe me, gentlemen, the first pair of shoes ever her mother had on

her feet I bought for her at Maybole fair, in Ayrshire. As for ornaments, we were married with a rush ring, and all the household furniture we possessed was a chaff-bed."

"Well, Mr. Salter," said Sir William, "I can only say that times are greatly changed for the better, and you have yourself to thank for it."

"That's what I say, sir," cried Salter, striking his clenched hand on the table till he made the glasses ring. "Let me see the man that has done so much out of so small a beginning. My son will have as fine an estate as any gentleman in the country, and as fine a house upon it as any nobleman. And if the family is *new*, why so is the *property*, and likely, therefore, like a *new coat*, to give some wear, which is more than some of the old ones will do," he added, winking, and looking exceedingly wise as he laughed at

his own wit. The mortified young ladies here rose, and tossing their heads and biting their lips, took their departure.

"Nothing would serve my daughters, when first we come to this vanity-fair," continued Mr. Salter, "but they must pass themselves off for ladies of high family, forsooth, and behave with impertinence to their betters, till they got themselves blown and cut too, as all that sail under false colours deserve to be. But let a man, I say, come forward with nothing but the truth in his mouth, and who shall despise him for having made his way in the world by honest industry?"

Mr. Salter's guests assented, in words at least, to his proposition, and thus encouraged, he proceeded, "A man who has had his own and his children's bred to get, may not have had much time, to be sure, *ither* for book-learning or

baw-making, and may not, therefore, be over good company neither for your scholar nor your fine gentleman ; but what e that ; there are plenty neither wiser nor genteeler than himself, why should'nt he be happy with them ! As for his children, why, if he can afford to make them independent, let him give them, as I have done, plenty of schooling with it, and so make them company for any man."

Geoffery here interrupted the discussion by rising to take his departure, pleading the ball at his aunt's, which he must attend, while Sir William Orm, finding there would be no chance of renewing the whist party, inveigled away the Marquis to the hazard-table. Mr. Salter, thus left to himself, was soon fast asleep in his chair ; and his usual nap being prolonged by his unusual potations, it was a couple of hours before he found his way

into the drawing-room. The disappointment of his daughters, on his making his appearance alone, may be imagined, when it is duly considered that they had waited tea, though we cannot say patiently, till near one o'clock in the morning for the gentlemen, of whose early retreat they were not aware.

So much for feeding illbred men of fashion, in the hope of securing in return what they have not to give—their politeness. After, therefore, expressing warmly their disapprobation of such rudeness, the Misses Salter had nothing for it but to retire to rest, venting on each other, 'till sleep closed their lips, the aggregate of spleen collected throughout the day from so many fruitful sources. Yet here were people whose more than common prosperity might have brought with it more than common happiness in their

own line, had not silly ambition and idle vanity poisoned every fountain of attainable enjoyment, and created an inconvenient thirst for the springs of a land of which they were never likely to become naturalized citizens.

The Misses Salter had always heard their poor father say, that he had spared no expense in their education; they knew that they possessed accomplishments, and prided themselves on remembering what they had been made to read at school. But they knew not, for it came not within their sphere to know, that there is an education of early habits effecting the minutiae of outward bearing, and acquired it would seem, by the unconscious mimicry of infancy, the stamp of which no after-school discipline can yet either erase or bestow; and still less were they capable of comprehending, that there is a further

education of refining sympathies and ennobling sentiments which, while as children of Adam we all share one first nature, bestows, in combination with that already named of early habits, a sort of second nature, on the privileged few, who from generation to generation have been reared, like exotics, amid the beautiful and beautifying blossoms of delicacy and feeling, sheltered from the rough winds of coarseness, the blighting atmosphere of necessity, and the cold ungenial climate of that almost justifiable selfishness unavoidably learned by those who have not only their own, but their family's imperious wants to supply by their individual anxious exertions.

Thus it is that shades of thinking, of feeling, and of judging, scarcely sufficiently palpable to form subjects of instruction, pass, unintentionally imparted, unconsciously imbibed, from father to

son, from mother to daughter, till education in this enlarged sense, in other words refinement, becomes a kind of hereditary distinction, which must be possessed for several succeeding generations before it can well exist in its highest perfection.

That these are very sufficient reasons why the various classes of society, for the comfort of all parties, should keep in their respective spheres, till gradually assimilated by time and circumstances, no one who knows the world can deny; the error lies in making pride instead of expediency the ground of separation,—the sin, in suffering the manifestations of that pride to be offensive.

CHAPTER VI.

LADY Arden stood with Alfred receiving the still arriving guests, while Willoughby was just leading away Lady Caroline to commence dancing. He trembled as she took his arm, some of the uncomfortable doubts expressed in his last interview with his brother recurring at the moment. "Why did she always receive his attentions without hesitation, he thought, or rather with a gentle, a winning acquiescence, yet never look happy?" This was a problem on which he pondered night and day, yet one

which he could never solve to his entire satisfaction. His intentions were declared in their manner and in their object, and when this is the case, he told himself again and again, not to avoid is surely to encourage.

This ball was Caroline's first meeting with Alfred since his return; for it may be remembered that in the morning he had only seen, not spoken to, nor been seen by her. Wiloughby's impatience had led him to overstep the bounds of etiquette. He had been watching near the door, and hearing Lady Palliser and her daughter announced in the first hall, hastened forward to meet them, given an arm to each, and led them into the ball-room. To address both with tolerable composure was no easy task for Alfred, but imperious necessity seemed to furnish him for the time with the necessary

strength. Lady Palliser, all smiles, expressed great pleasure at seeing him, but Caroline's eyes instantly sought the ground, and a glow which no effort could suppress, suffused her cheeks. Alfred became as suddenly pale—a kind of terror seized him when he recognized the well-known symptom of emotion, and beheld that accession of loveliness which the fleeting brilliancy never failed to bestow on one, the perfect beauty of whose features and form was always to him an object sufficiently dangerous. Willoughby's leading her away, as already noticed, to commence the dancing, was almost a welcome relief.

"I cannot understand, my dear Alfred," said his mother anxiously, as during a pause in the arrivals they stood for a moment quite apart; "your present position with Lady Caroline?

Willoughby seems as if by the general consent of all the parties to have taken your place ; the lady receives him just as but the other day she did you, and you stand by as if perfectly satisfied that your services were no longer required."

"They are no longer required," said Alfred, "and this is, in fact, the only explanation that can be given."

"No, no ; there is some foolish misunderstanding," said Lady Arden, "and I fear," she added, "you are resigning not only your interest, but your happiness too easily."

"You would not deny a lady freedom of choice," whispered Alfred, as the approach of fresh guests put an end to the conversation. Lady Arden however, who loved all her children tenderly, but Alfred above all, was far

from satisfied. She sighed, and was compelled to await in silence a more favourable opportunity for discussing the subject.

The quadrille, and the waltz which succeeded it, being concluded, Willoughby led his partner to a kind of arbour, formed by enclosing the veranda, which was well supplied with exotics and flowering shrubs, with an awning of canvass, so that the whole range of French windows could, without imprudence, be permitted to stand open. It would seem that they must have found this retreat a pleasing one, for it was some time before they re-appeared, and when they did so, the countenances of both wore a suspicious aspect, Willoughby's looked delighted, Caroline's conscious and confused.

Alfred had been considering that, to keep up

appearances, he must, particularly being at home, ask Lady Caroline to dance. He felt sick at heart when he contemplated the exertion of false spirits it would require to carry him through such an undertaking; yet the more he dreaded the task, the more imperiously did he feel himself called upon to go through its performance. As soon, therefore, as our heroine with her late partner returned to the dancing-room in the manner described, he approached. He was much struck by the expression of Willoughby's countenance: he, however, proffered his request by a sort of indistinct murmur. It was acceded to in sounds quite as inarticulate, and he felt Caroline's trembling fingers laid as lightly as possible on his proffered arm. The room now swam round, and how he found his way into a quadrille which was forming, he never knew.

The quadrille ended ; a waltz tune instantly commenced, and all the couples fell into the ring, as if it were a matter of course ; and with the rest, Alfred and Caroline,—neither perhaps, now that the latter had forfeited her plea of never waltzing, being prepared to give a reason for not doing as others did. If even the quadrille had been an agitating task to poor Alfred, the waltz certainly did not tend to compose his nerves ; while the idea of Willoughby, which was never for a moment absent, made every thought and feeling agony. Yet was it useful ; it gave firmness, if not sternness to his deportment, and so enabled him to get creditably through the concluding ceremonies of leading Caroline to a sofa beside Lady Palliser, and procuring for her an ice, &c.

On crossing the apartment he encountered

Willoughby near a window, took his arm, and drew him into the veranda. He had, as we have already mentioned, been struck with the expression of Willoughby's countenance, and could not help suspecting that some conversation of a peculiarly interesting nature must have just passed between him and Caroline; while he fancied that, could he once know the worst to a certainty, he should afterwards be able to meet his fate with composure.

"I think, Willoughby," he said, with tolerably well acted playfulness, but looking down, for he could not venture to meet his brother's eye, "that you have something to communicate that has given you pleasure; and if so, do not fear it can give me pain. I trust I am not so wretchedly selfish! That I have not been fortunate myself, I already know; that

you, my dear brother, should be more so, should not surely add to my disappointment; nay, believe me, if I had a lingering regret remaining, it would vanish before the certainty of your happiness."

Thus encouraged, Willoughby, after some little hesitation, confessed that Alfred's suspicions were just; that there had been a conversation of the nature he supposed, and that he had met with so favourable a hearing that he intended on the following day to speak to Lady Palliser on the subject. Alfred, who had overrated his own strength, had not a word to offer in reply. Fortunately, however, at the moment both brothers hearing themselves inquired for by some of their sisters, returned accordingly into the dancing-room.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Alfred quitted Lady Arden, her ladyship was joined, at her post near the door, by Mrs. Dorothea, who having much anxious business to arrange, was looking very important, with a large pack of her own printed visiting cards in her hand. On the said cards was added in writing, the words "At Home," together with a certain date, and in a corner nine o'clock; from which latter memorandum hopes of dancing were to be inferred. The date had been chosen with great nicety; for this was to be Mrs. Doro-

thea's grand party for the season, and must be given while she had her nice house, and before she should be obliged to go back into miserable little confined lodgings, and discharge her footman, &c. Still she wished it to be after Lady Arden's ball; for on that opportunity was placed her grand dependence for picking up beaux. It was for this laudable purpose that the pack of cards already mentioned had been brought in her reticule, and the convenient position near the door taken up. Every lord of the creation who made his appearance was immediately introduced by Lady Arden to Mrs. Dorothea; for, if her ladyship was in any danger of forgetting to do so, she invariably received a reminding twitch of the sleeve, which obliged her in self-defence, or rather in defence of the sit of her blond, to perform the ceremony forthwith: notwithstanding

which preventive measures, a nice observer might have remarked, for the remainder of the evening, a slight droop about the elbow of the gauze balloon, which had the misfortune to be nearest the assailant. The introduction made, a card was instantly presented by Mrs. Dorothea to each gentleman, and with a slight bow pocketed by him. At length, however, one beau arrived, whom it was Mrs. Dorothea's turn to introduce to Lady Arden. She did so with great pomp and circumstance, as well as with evident triumph. The gentleman, whose name was Cameron, was rather on the wrong side of fifty-five, with a bald head, and blinking eyes, an Indian complexion, and small features; but a certain smirking expression withal, and an air of youthful activity, which denoted that he was still a bachelor.

We did our friend Cameron injustice when we said that he was bald; for he was still in possession of certainly not less than three hairs on either side his head. While, as to the high estimation in which those said hairs were held by their owner, no one could entertain a doubt, who had ever seen the establishment kept expressly for their due culture and arrangement. In the first place, Mr. Archibald Cameron's dressing table was adorned with a display of no less than four large-sized, patent, penetrating hair brushes, of the latest and most improved kind; next, were ranges of bottles of self-curling fluid, *huile antique à la rose*, &c. and pots of *pommade aux mille fleurs*, with combs of every description; to say nothing of a sly little one in a case for the waistcoat pocket, which, on all such occasions as morning visits, state

gauze balloon, which had the nearest the assailant. The instant a card was instantly presented to each gentleman, and without being pocketed by him. At length Beau arrived, whom it was Mrs. Arden's pleasure to introduce to Lady Arden. In great pomp and circumstance there was evident triumph. The gentleman, Mr. Cameron, was rather on the side of fifty-five, with a bald head, a dark complexion, and something of an Indian complexion, and something of a certain smirking expression.

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dinners, &c., was taken out in the hall, and used with the assistance of a pocket glass, drawn from the fellow pocket, to coax the two said side locks upwards, and by pointing them towards each other, induce them, as nearly as possible, to meet over the centre of the naked polished forehead. But as this was an undertaking too difficult to be always achieved with perfect success, the restive curls not unfrequently stood on end with the most obstinate pertinacity, like the pricked-up ears of a listening cur. There was no help for this; for when the curls refused to be coaxed, they were too great favourites to be quarrelled with, so they were just obliged to be allowed to have their own way.

While Mr. Cameron stood speaking to Lady Arden and Mrs. Dorothea, the latter lady looked

frequently about her, with evident anxiety. At length she made what she intended for a private signal with her fan to Madeline, whom she espied walking up and down, leaning on the arm of her last partner, one of those unhappy young men, *no match for any one*, of whom the most prudent mothers are, notwithstanding, obliged to admit a certain number when they give a ball, merely as dancing machines. This is one very serious objection to giving absolute balls at all: it being rather awkward to cut people whom one has exhibited at one's own house. We question, therefore, whether it would not be more prudent in ladies with unmarried daughters to resign, altogether, the eclat of ball-giving, and limit themselves to a select quadrille, got up *purposely* by accident; in which every partner

for the dance should be a desirable partner for life : in case it should so happen.

Madeline, in obedience to her aunt's summons, approached : Mrs. Dorothea, with the greatest stateliness, held out her elbow, of which her niece accepted the proffered support, making at the same time a slight courtesy to her late partner, as at once a dismissal, and a recompence for past services. He accordingly perceiving he was *de trop* took himself off. Aunt Dorothea, now glancing at Madeline with the side of her eye, drew herself up, pursed her mouth, and looked amazingly consequential ; at length, after a delay sufficient in her opinion to take off all particularity, she availed herself of a pause in the conversation, and after remarking to Mr. Cameron, that she supposed he was a dancing

man, presented him to Madeline. Had Cameron been but three-and-twenty he might have affected indifference about, or even a dislike to, the particular modification of locomotion alluded to; but as any demur at his particular stage of existence might have given occasion for illnatured people to surmise that his dancing days were over, he declared himself a most devoted votary of the mirth-promoting rites of the light fantastic toe, and asking Madeline to dance, led her towards the ball-room.

"Well," said Mrs. Dorothea, to Lady Arden, "I have managed that so nicely."

"And who, my dear madam, is that comical quizz?" demanded her ladyship.

"Quizz, indeed! I should not have introduced Mr. Cameron to my niece," said Mrs. Dorothea, haughtily, "had he not been a man

of high connexions, unexceptionable character, and very large fortune."

"I have not the slightest doubt of your prudence, my dear ma'am, I merely alluded to his appearance."

"I see nothing the matter with his appearance, ma'am."

"The matter, oh, no; merely he is a droll looking being: but what did you say was his fortune?"

"While Governor of Madras he is said to have realised about fifty thousand pounds, and a short time before he returned from India, he succeeded unexpectedly to the family property, about seven thousand a-year, beside which, now that his elder brother is dead, he is heir to his uncle, Lord Dunsmoor, whose title and estates, of full thirty thousand per annum, he must in-

herit. That is a sort of quizz which I think your ladyship will allow is not to be met with every day."

"No, certainly, as you say. If he should take a fancy to Madeline, I hope she won't think him too old."

"If Madeline should, like many other young people, be very silly, I should hope she would have your ladyship to think for her."

All this was of course said aside, and *sotto voce*. Had the situation been better adapted to confidential conversation, much more would have been said, particularly by Aunt Dorothea, who considered Mr. Cameron the very first prize in life's lottery.

At two or three-and-twenty, when a poor younger brother and "*no match for any one*," he had been a passionate lover of Aunt Dorothea,

then a beautiful girl of nineteen. But a marriage at that time would have been too imprudent a thing to be thought of, and so they parted. This was five-and-thirty years ago. For about the first ten years both parties had been very faithful; but the affair had since, like most early engagements, died a natural death.

Aunt Dorothea, to do her justice, had too much good sense to dream of any one continuing to be a lover of hers at her present age. And as for Cameron, although a halo of romance had lingered around the remembered image of his "First Love," even 'till their meeting on the very morning of the evening we are now describing; it was the blooming girl of nineteen whom his fancy still painted, such as she had looked five-and-thirty years before; when vowing eternal truth, he had bade her a long fare-

well. One sight of our respectable friend Mrs. Dorothea Arden, now fifty-four years of age, banished in an instant every romantic idea as associated with the personal attractions of that lady.

The former lovers became, however, at once excellent friends ; and in the course of that day Aunt Dorothea laid her plan for making up a match between one, whom she considered a sort of valuable heir-loom that ought not to be allowed to go out of the family, and her favourite niece, Madeline, who had always been reckoned like Mrs. Dorothea, and her aunt knew her to be still disengaged.

Woman—the delicate day lily, blooms her hour—fades, and disappears for ever from beauty's garden ! Man—the hardy evergreen braves the cold storm of disappointment—stands

through the long winter of delay—and when his genial season of prosperity at last arrives, finds fair companions still in the smiling buds of each succeeding spring.

CHAPTER VIII.

MADELINE was considered by every one very like her aunt. To Cameron she was the vision of his early days, restored unchanged.

The years of past toil faded to a dream—the polished barrenness of the forehead—the scanty growth and restive sit of the side locks—nay, certain twitches of rheumatism in the knee and ankle joints were all forgotten; he felt himself five-and-twenty, and not a day

more! He was in an ecstacy—a delirium;—in short, he was desperately in love. He danced like a *Vestris*, and between the regular evolutions of the quadrille, frisked about his partner, a perfect grasshopper: for such was his excessive eagerness to oblige, that he waited not between each service rendered to make the obsequious angle of knee or elbow straight again, but fetched and carried with the docility of a spaniel, in attitudes which, could he but have seen himself in a mirror, must have made even himself laugh. The performance ended, Madeline took his arm and walked towards aunt Dorothea, with a strange, conscious, half-pouting expression of countenance, evidently not knowing whether she ought to be flattered or annoyed by the conspicuous assiduities of her old beau.

Cameron was sent in pursuit of a passing tray to procure an ice. With an air of infinite triumph Mrs. Dorothea patted the dimpled cheek of her niece, and whispered, "I wish you joy, my dear, of your brilliant conquest, for I do think Mr. Cameron seems to be quite smitten already."

"Oh, but aunt, such an old man!"

"Nonsense, my dear, we were all young once, and you won't be young always recollect, so mind what you're about."

The return of Cameron put an end to the lecture, which was only however postponed to a more convenient opportunity. This occurred on the dispersion of the company, when the family party collected at one end of a long deserted supper table to talk over the events of the evening.

"I only hope, Madeline," commenced Mrs. Dorothea, "that this affair may go on as prosperously as it has commenced, and you will be quite an Eastern queen."

"If he were a nice young man," said Madeline.

"He is quite young enough," retorted Mrs. Dorothea, "a girl should always marry a man somewhat older than herself."

"Somewhat; yes, but not twice or three times."

"It is impossible, my dear child, to combine every advantage," observed Lady Arden, with a sigh, "and the establishment, as your aunt says, would undoubtedly be a very brilliant one." Willoughby, Jane, and Louisa, all enquired eagerly about the fortune and connexions of the gentleman, and on being informed

of every particular, confessed that it would certainly be a most desirable match.

"When we consider too," said Lady Arden, "the great difficulty, the next to impossibility, of meeting with suitable establishments for girls of good family and small fortunes. They cannot marry wealthy men of low connexions—that would be disgracing their families; they cannot marry the younger sons of good families, as they too are of course poor; and the elder sons cannot marry them, for they want money to pay off their incumbrances; so that when a girl so situated chances to make a conquest of a man who can afford to marry her, she may be said to be unusually fortunate." To have escaped, she might have added, the saddest of all the *Dilemmas of Pride*.

“ Whatever sort of fellow the man may be,” interrupted Willoughby, laughing.

“ That is not at all a fair inference,” replied her ladyship. “ We are of course taking it for granted that the gentleman is of unexceptionable character, agreeable, and, in short, all that a gentleman ought to be.”

“ Which is, you will allow,” persisted Willoughby, “ taking a good deal for granted. The only thing you ladies seem determined not to take for granted is the fortune.”

“ Luckily,” observed Mrs. Dorothea, “ there is nothing to take for granted in this case. Indeed,” she added, drawing up, “ I should not, as I said before, have introduced Mr. Cameron to my niece if he had not been in every way a desirable connexion.”

The immediate prospect of the title was

now discussed, the uncle being eighty-six ; the magnificence of the fine old place ; the splendour of the town residence ; the entertainments to be given ; the equipages, the diamonds, and so forth : while at every pause Madeline was pronounced by her aunt a most fortunate girl, till vanity at length stirring within her, she began to think that she really was fortunate ; and that she must, she supposed, be civil to her old beau the next time she saw him.

After this, when Lady Arden had retired to her own room, accompanied by Madeline, who was her sleeping companion, she renewed the conversation in a serious and tender strain, representing strongly to her daughter the great danger of appearing for a season or two unappropriated, with the ultimate and utter wretched-

edness of the single state, than which she did not know if even an unhappy marriage were not preferable. "Mrs. Dorothea says, you know," she added, trying to treat the subject jestingly, though herself ill at ease, "that a bad husband, from which heaven preserve you, my child!" she fervently ejaculated, "is quite a *natural* misfortune, and therefore easy to endure, in comparison with the unnatural misery of having no tie to life; no affections, no feelings, no hopes, no fears, no joys, no sorrows; yet to be surrounded with the most undignified annoyances, and to feel that for want of more important objects of interest, one's mind is degraded into being their very slave, with just enough left of its former self to make it sensible of its debasement. The cares of the wife and mother, however numerous, however anxious, are compara-

tively ennobling ! For though it is our second self, and our children, who may be said to be parts of ourselves, that are their objects, still they are not felt for self alone ; they do not spring from that most unredeemed of instincts, individual selfishness. Then, in the case of Mr. Cameron," proceeded her ladyship, " he is, your aunt says, so peculiarly amiable, and bears in every particular so high a character, that there is every reason to hope that where he fixed his affections he would make a kind and good husband." And here again Lady Arden enlarged on the splendour of the match, yet with tears in her eyes, and even more than her usual indulgent tenderness of manner ; for while she could not bear to resign prospects so dazzling, she looked anxiously at her blooming child, and feared the sacrifice might be too great.

Madeline, very much affected by her mother's fond and winning gentleness, said, and thought at the time, she was sure that she should be quite happy in doing anything that would give her pleasure, promising to be always and in every thing guided by her advice.

“ Still, my love, 'tis you yourself who must ultimately decide ; only don't be rash in casting away, should it ever be in your offer, what has so many advantages.”

This doubt as to the fact of her having made the so much talked of conquest at all, sounded somewhat disagreeable in Madeline's ear ; and perhaps went further in creating a desire to secure the said brilliant establishment than all which had been said in its favour. She began already to think herself threatened with the

fate of Aunt Dorothea ; and contrasting that in imagination with what she was told her lot would be as the wife of Mr. Cameron, she came to the conclusion, that whenever he made her an offer of his hand she supposed she must accept it !

What were the while the thoughts of the lover, as "sleepless he lay on his pillow ?" Smiles, dimples, and ringlets, floated in lovely confusion before his mind's eye ; the latter, however, brought with them a painful remembrance of the scantiness of his own locks ; then immediately followed visions of gold and silver, and precious stones ; and gratitude and adoration ; all to be offered at the feet of his fair idol, if she would but kindly overlook the *slight* disparity in their ages, and become his wife. What equipages, too, she

should have; what a palace she should dwell in; and as to her own fair person, it should blaze the very queen of diamonds!

What a happy man, despite an extra twitch of rheumatism, brought on by his dancing, would our old beau have been, had "some good angel," not exactly "ope'd to him the book of fate" perhaps, but whispered to him the propitious resolve just formed by the lovely object of his affections.

The angel, of course, would have had too much politeness to mention that the lady intended to marry him solely for the glitter of his title and his gold.

Thus do we see the identical class of persons whom pride, were they starving, would not suffer to seek a livelihood by selling any thing else in the world, for very pride's sake willing

to sell themselves !!! Such are the strange monsters of inconsistency to which the prejudices of society give birth.

Such, in short, are the *Dilemmas of Pride !!!*

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CHAPTER IX.

WILLOUGHBY was fidgeting in and out of the drawing-room, looking at his watch every five minutes, drawing off and on his gloves, and whistling out of tune, although his ear was excellent. Alfred was seated in a corner reading a book, which he said he was anxious to finish, having on that plea, though in general so obliging, refused to walk out with his sisters. The fact was, that he was miserably desirous to watch the movements of Willoughby, and be on the spot to hear from himself the earliest ac-

count of the result of his intended visit at Lady Palliser's. Willoughby suspected as much, but neither had the courage to speak to his brother on the subject, though they had the room quite to themselves, and knew that they enjoyed each other's confidence. At length Willoughby, after looking at his watch rather longer than usual, put it abruptly back into his pocket, once more drew on his gloves, but now so hastily that he deprived one of a thumb ; he then took his hat and smoothed it round and round three several times with the wrist of his coat, paused irresolutely between each deliberate performance of the operation, as if intending to say something, and yet at length, without speaking at all, rushed through one of the French windows which opened on the lawn, and disappeared. Alfred, as soon as he was alone, raised his head from

his book, and with parted lips held his breath, to listen for the tread of his brother's foot on the gravel, first in their own garden, then in the adjoining one. He next heard his knock, and a few moments after could distinguish, though not the precise words, Willoughby's voice inquiring, of course, if Lady Palliser were at home. Lastly he heard the entering step and closing door.

Now it was Alfred's turn to pace up and down the apartment. He did so with hurried and unequal steps for about ten minutes, then flung himself on a sofa, and lay perfectly motionless, his eyes vacant of expression, for their sight was turned inward, where fancy was busily pourtraying the scene probably passing at the moment in Lady Palliser's drawing-room—that very room in which he had lately spent so many

blissful hours; in which he had so often yielded to the fatally fascinating conviction that he was beloved by a heart too innocent to hide its feelings; that very room in which he had finally been accepted with seeming confidence, with seeming tenderness; and yet in which but a few hours after, he had been as capriciously, as unfeelingly rejected; nay, rejected with the most unequivocal symptoms of personal aversion, and that without any possible cause being assigned, except the lady's having, in the mean time, met with and determined to captivate his elder brother, who was a much richer, and as head of the family, a greater man. And she had accomplished her end. Willoughby was probably at this very moment declaring his love! How did Caroline listen? He pictured her such as she had looked while

he had himself spoken ; and the most pitiable agitation overwhelmed him. After the lapse of half an hour he again heard footsteps on the gravel. He started up—he stood at the window ; he saw Willoughby approaching, his countenance beaming with satisfaction. How strange were his own sensations ; the exquisite pang instantly checked by the bitterest self-reproach. Was it possible ?—Could he when he beheld the face of his kind, affectionate, dear brother, expressive of happiness, grieve at the sight ?—Oh, for shame ! it was not so—it should not be so—as to his own disappointment, that had been an ascertained thing long before ;—why recur to it now ! By this time Willoughby had entered and grasped his hand. Alfred mastered his emotion, and cordially returning the pressure of the hand, said with a forced smile, “ I see you have been accepted ? ”

"I have—it is not however to take place for several months; so Lady Palliser has invited me in the mean while to stay some time with them in ——shire; and after I have been to Arden, and made all my arrangements there, I am to join them in Paris, whence we are to proceed through some parts of Italy and Germany; all previous to—to—the ratification of our engagement. They will leave Cheltenham, I believe, to-morrow or next day; but I am to spend this evening with them *en famille*, when I shall know all their plans."

Fortunately for Alfred, the walking party returned at this moment, which spared him the painful necessity of either hearing more or speaking at all, beyond the one warmly expressed ejaculation, "May you be truly happy!"

Each of the girls was attended by her respective lover; Louisa indeed by both of hers, and Mrs. Dorothea was chaperon, as she was on all occasions when Lady Arden felt fatigued; for the young people knew very well they had only to get about their good-natured aunt and declare they could not do without her, to make sure of her services.

"What has become of Mr. Cameron?" asked Mrs. Dorothea. Madeline had been thinking the same question. "Surely he has not slipped away without bidding us good morning!" continued the old lady, "he came to the door with us."

The object of their enquiries now made his appearance; he had merely in passing through the hall slunk behind the party a little to comb up the sidecurls; and they had either been

more unmanageable than usual, or their owner had become more than ever anxious about his personal appearance.

A long luncheon-table was laid in the dining-room, furnished with many good things which had adorned the supper of the night before; with this resource, a little flirtation, and a good deal of music—for all the girls sang and played on various instruments, nothing could be more gay and agreeable than the party. Even Henry Lindsey was in high good humour; for Louisa had that morning bestowed on him two smiles for each one she had vouchsafed Sir James.

Lady Arden, who was never early after a night of raking, joined them in the midst of their merriment, looking, however, rather serious herself; for Willoughby had been up

to her dressing-room, and had confided to her his pleasing prospects, and though she could not absolutely grieve at the happiness of any of her children, she certainly could not help regretting in this particular instance that Alfred had not been the successful suitor. Setting aside a peculiar overflow of tenderness for him as the secret favourite of her heart, she considered that, in a pecuniary point of view it would have been a most desirable match for him, while his brother did not require fortune. And then she had watched Alfred, and had traced, or at least thought she could trace, effort in his manner, and even in the very tones of his voice a cadence that was not quite natural. There was something, in short, in the sound, that made her look at him while he spoke, and pained her, she could not tell why. He sat

opposite to her at the said luncheon-table, and had just offered to help her to something. She met his eyes and saw that they rose and fell unsteadily before the enquiring expression of hers. The first time they were alone, or at least thought themselves so, her enquiries were so tender that he could no longer act a part. His eyes filled with tears ; ashamed of these he hid his face for a few moments, then, as if to apologise for his weakness, with a vehement burst of feeling confessed the ardour of his attachment ; the hopes he had been authorised to entertain—nay, how he had been on the morning of the very evening on which Willoughby arrived, actually accepted ; and then on the very morning after as absolutely rejected, and from interested motives he could not doubt ; there was no time for preference. And

here, he added some bitter reflections on the misery of being a younger brother, till his more generous feelings prevailing again he spoke with his usual affection of Willoughby, and of his chief consolation being in the thought of his happiness, for the sake of which it was that he had struggled, and still would struggle to conceal, and ultimately subdue every feeling of his own.

Geoffery had been all this while laying *perdu* on a sofa in the adjoining drawing-room, the folding doors to which were open; he had therefore heard enough of the foregoing conversation to be tolerably *au fait* of the family secrets of which it treated, sufficiently so at least for a future purpose, of which, however, he was not, indeed could not be at the time aware. On the philosophical principle,

however, that "knowledge is power," perhaps he thought it as well to have all the knowledge he could obtain. A knowledge of peoples' affairs does sometimes, there is no question, place them in our power.

Without therefore announcing his presence he retained his unseen position till Lady Arden and Alfred had severally quitted the room.

CHAPTER X.

In the evening, when Willoughby was preparing to go to Lady Palliser's, he received a miniature note from her ladyship, saying, that Caroline's cold was so much worse that she was not able to leave her room, which untoward circumstance compelled them to resign the pleasure of seeing him that evening.

He was of course much disappointed. The next morning, and for several succeeding ones, he called regularly; sometimes saw Lady Palliser, sometimes not; but Caroline was still

invisible, being confined to her apartment by severe indisposition. Alfred, who felt that his fate was now sealed, longed for the quiet of Arden; and on the pretext of shooting, had proposed going thither. But Mrs. Dorothea would not hear of his leaving Cheltenham till after her party; and Lady Arden wished him, if possible, to be present at his sister Jane's marriage. Our kind-hearted hero therefore, the least selfish of beings, though fatigued by the perpetual effort to force his spirits imposed by society, consented to remain for the present.

Madeline, in pursuance of the prudent resolve she had formed, received Mr. Cameron's attentions in so amiable a manner, that he became very shortly a declared and received lover, and the happiest of men. She too, was for the present, or at least thought herself quite happy.

Being the least striking of the family she had hitherto had rather an humble opinion of her personal attractions ; she was therefore highly flattered and gratified by Mr. Cameron's absolute adoration. Her imagination too, dazzled by anticipations somewhat resembling the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, learnt to revel in the prospect of splendours heaped on splendours, as offerings at the shrine of her own charms ; while, never having entertained a preference for any one else, her better feelings also found a pleasing resting place, in the thoughts of the promised fond devotion of her future husband. She could now sit like one really in love, and muse with delight on the prospect of the accomplishment of her every wish—the indulgence of her every whim—the worship of her very faults, which she flattered herself she was securing for

life by marrying Mr. Cameron. In short, she was in high spirits ; and in such good humour with fate, that she even began to think she should not have been half so happy had she been about to marry a younger man, who would have met her on more equal terms ; or, had he been a man of fortune, would have thought perhaps that he was doing her the favour.

Louisa's mind, on the contrary, was in a very unsettled state. Sir James had proposed to her more than once. He had certainly not been accepted, but he had as certainly not been rejected with any thing like rational decision. But people did not seem to think it necessary to be rational with poor Sir James. She had told him, it is true, again and again, in a pert and childish manner, that she never would marry him ; but she had laughed the while,

and he had taken it all in good part, saying, that the girls liked to be tantalising. He had asked her at length for the measure of her finger: she had given him that of her wrist. With this he had repaired to a jewellers.

The shopman had assured him there must be some mistake; but at the same time recommended his taking the lady a very splendid bracelet, which was, he added, a present that should always precede the presentation of the ring.

Though Sir James was by no means careless of his money in general, he was now too much in love to give prudential considerations a thought; he therefore allowed the man to put up the highest priced bracelet in his whole collection. Its beauty pleased Louisa, and she was silly enough to accept and wear it: nay, Sir James

himself was allowed to clasp it on her arm. This produced a scene with Henry: for our little baronet, vain of his unusual munificence, had kept the circumstance no secret. Louisa, beginning to fear she was getting entangled with a man whom she could not seriously decide on accepting, was vexed and out of spirits, and consequently staid at home that evening from the walks, on pretext of a headache.

Henry, always violent and imprudent, the moment he saw that she was not of the walking party, quitted the promenade, and repaired to Laden Arden's villa.

It was late and almost quite dark when, unannounced, he entered the drawing-room from the lawn by an open French window.

Louisa, who was alone and had flung herself on a sofa, thus taken by surprise, had

but time to rise partially from her reclining position.

He approached. It so happened that though the apartment was without lights, a stray beam from a lamp at the distance of the little lawn gate, was caught and reflected, as Louisa moved her arm, by the bright jewels of the luckless bracelet.

Henry seized the arm with the fierceness of a highwayman, wrenched the snap, and flung the bracelet to the further end of the room ; then suddenly calmed by a sense of shame and contrition at his own brutal violence, stood petrified without attempting to utter a syllable. Louisa rose proudly. "By what authority, Mr. Lyndsey," she exclaimed, "have you dared to offer me this insult?" While speaking she was crossing the room to ring the bell.

and order the intruder to be shown out. Guessing her intention, he started from his state of stupor, flew to intercept her, flung himself at her feet, seized both her hands, and leaning his face against them, sobbed violently.

“ Hear me ! ” he exclaimed in broken accents. “ My ruffianly, my wholly unjustifiable conduct, was at least unpremeditated ; I had no thought of even uttering a reproach. I entered here but to bid you an eternal farewell ! Louisa, I am a miserable, a desperate man———I am about to quit England for ever.”

Louisa, who was speaking at the same time, was commanding him to quit her presence instantly, or suffer her to reach the bell ; but

when he mentioned quitting England for ever, her voice became less firm. Yet she persisted in telling him that he must be gone—that she must not incur the unjust suspicion of having remained at home to receive his highly improper visit. How soon such commands were obeyed is not precisely known ; when the party however returned from the walks Louisa was alone, though in manner strange and abstracted, and in a state of agitation so great, that when requested, as the only one who had not a bonnet to remove, to make tea, the small bunch of keys fell twice from her trembling fingers ere she could contrive to open the caddy ; while every other part of the simple ceremony was performed in an equally bungling and insufficient manner : from all which it seems scarcely more

than fair to infer, that whether the scene concluded in a reconciliation or a last farewell, the lady had had but little time to compose her nerves between the departure of her lover and the entrance of her friends.

CHAPTER XI.

AUNT Dorothea had fixed her ball for the evening of the day of Jane's marriage, that it might be a kind of wedding party ; and such had been the mighty preparations for a day, thus doubly momentous, that what with selecting and displaying wedding finery—finding out where to hire cheapest coloured lamps, waiters, and forms—hurrying milliners, and seeing packing-cases carefully opened—hunting up newly-arrived beaux, begging evergreens, admiring jewels and new carriages, ordering ices

and rout cake, bargaining with confectioners about a standing supper, and ordering in some wine ; for, as a single lady, she had of course no cellar ; then planning where the said wine had best stand, that it might not be drank by the waiters instead of the company ; and, lastly, considering where to put the music, that it might be heard by the dancers, without taking up room ; that, as Sarah said, when dressing her mistress for the great occasion, “ It was surprising that she had a foot to stand on at last.” The feet were a little swollen, it must be confessed, which obliged her, so Sarah, in support of her assertion to that effect told Mrs. Johnson, to snip the binding of her new white satin shoes.

She had got on wonderfully however ; had gone to church with the wedding party—been

of great assistance to Lady Arden in getting through the public breakfast ; seen the happy couple off ; helped to send away packages of cake and gloves ; refused to dine at her sister-in-law's, on the plea of all she had to do at home ; eat a mutton chop in her bed-room, the dining-room being already occupied by the standing supper, the drawing-room by a great step-ladder, and two workmen hanging a hired lamp from the centre of the ceiling ; the spare bed-room with card tables, the bed being taken down ; and lastly, the dressing-room being fitted up with the already mentioned evergreens, as a grotto for the refreshments. The mode in which they were here arranged was Mrs. Dorothea's happiest invention, and one on which she greatly prided herself.

At the upper end of the grotto was erected a

pile of real ornamental rock-work, which had been brought in on purpose from the garden. Between the crevices of the rocks were stuck all manner of flowers and flowering shrubs ; at the top of the heap, on a large space purposely made level, were placed a well-known common kind of dessert dishes, of green china, in the shape of large leaves, and on those dishes moulds turned out of different coloured ices, resembling so many painted specimens of variegated spars and marbles ; while among and around all were scattered rout cakes in abundance, which formed a very tolerable imitation of pebbles, shells, and mosses. The grotto was furnished with rustic seats and a rustic table, also borrowed from the garden ; and on the table lay a supply of the small leaves, or small plates, of the said green china.

dessert set, with spoons, of course; so that, as Aunt Dorothea said, the gentlemen must be very stupid if they could not take the hint, and help their partners to a spoonful of marble or spar, and a few pebbles or shells, as taste should direct. There was very little fear, however, of mistake or oversight; for the grotto was Mrs. Dorothea's hobby, so that she not only showed almost every couple the way to it herself, but favoured each with geological lectures on the virtues and properties of all its *natural* productions. That all might be in perfect keeping, the only light admitted to this favoured spot, proceeded from a single ground-glass lamp, of the size and shape of the moon, and so ingeniously placed among the evergreens, as to bear a respectable resemblance to the queen of night, rising to view from behind a forest.

Mrs. Dorothea, by another excellent contrivance, added much to the effect of her drawing-rooms, which, like those of most watering-place villas, were on the ground floor, and had French windows. The end one of these looked directly up one of the public walks, which the proprietors were in the habit of illuminating on occasion, and which was therefore provided with lamps. These Mrs. Dorothea had obtained permission to have lighted, so that the long vista from her open French window, looked very beautiful; particularly as some of the least prudent of the company thought fit, between the dancing, to step out and walk up and down.

It happened to be one of the few very hot summers we are occasionally blessed with in this country. So that though it was now the

middle of September, the weather was still very sultry, and it was only late at night that there was any thing like a refreshing coolness in the air.

Lady Caroline Montague was still so unwell as to keep her room, so that neither her ladyship nor Lady Palliser were able to come out. This was a great disappointment to others besides Mrs. Dorothea; it was one, however, for which Willoughby was fully prepared; for though he had of course called every day to inquire for Lady Caroline, she had not been well enough to see even him. The ball was, nevertheless, going off with great spirit. Being a wedding party, in the first place, gave it *éclat*; and then Aunt Dorothea had insisted on its being opened by her favourite Madeline and that far-famed hereditary beau of her own, Mr. Cameron,

whom she was so proud and so pleased to have handed down to her niece in such high preservation.

Fate, however, had ordained that Mrs. Dorothea Arden's ball should be marked by more than one memorable event.

Louisa, after dancing with Sir James, had also, as she generally did, danced with Henry Lindsey; who, instead of quitting England, had made his appearance at Mrs. Dorothea's with a flushed cheek, an angry eye, and a hurried, absent manner. When the quadrille had concluded, they were among the *imprudent* couples who ventured to promenade the illuminated walk. Henry seemed to think the affair of last night forgiven or forgotten, for he began in his usual passionate strain to talk of the fervour of his own attachment,

and reproach Louisa with comparative coldness.

For the gratification of a culpable vanity, as well as from really feeling a secret preference for Henry, Louisa had so long listened to such language as this, and thus authorised him to believe himself beloved, that she now literally knew not how to pacify him ; although she was far from having made up her mind to sacrifice, either to his feelings or her own, the title and brilliant establishment which still awaited her acceptance, if she could but bring herself to take the advice of her friends, and marry his brother.

Henry could not be blind to what were the wishes of Louisa's family ; and he had of late had many reasons, besides the acceptance of the bracelet, to suspect that she herself hesi-

tated. The idea drove him almost mad. The interview of last night, though it had convinced him of his power over Louisa when present, had by no means silenced his fears as to what she might be persuaded to do or to promise in his absence ; he had determined, therefore, to bring matters to a crisis. He besought her, with all the eloquence of which he was master, to end his suspense, and pronounce his doom. She hesitated—she knew she should never be permitted to marry Henry ; and thinking that she had already indulged too long in an idle flirtation, a foolish preference that must end in nothing, she confessed at last how much it was her mother's wish that she should marry Sir James. Henry lost all self-command ; overwhelmed her with reproaches ; raved at her perfidy, her cruelty ; and after

working himself up to a perfect phrenzy, threatened to put a period to his existence that very night—that very hour, and before her eyes.

As his agitation increased, his step quickened, till it was almost impossible for Louisa to keep pace with him ; while, as the interest of the conversation deepened, he led her first as much apart from the other couples as possible, and finally, turning short round a corner, quitted the general promenade altogether. He then, with his really alarmed companion, entered a cross walk, which was shrouded in almost total obscurity, except that at the furthest point of its long and unfrequented vista, one solitary lamp glimmered, as if but to make the surrounding gloom more apparent.

Louisa's terror was now extreme: she felt

certain that he had dragged her to this gloomy spot to witness, as he had declared she should, the horrible act of suicide he was about to commit.

CHAPTER XII.

ARRIVED about midway in the long dark walk, Henry at length paused. What with agitation and the quickness of his pace, he seemed himself exhausted, while Louisa, faint with alarm and fatigue, was no longer able to stand unassisted, much less to walk. There was no seat near, he was obliged to support her by an arm round her waist. She leaned her head on his shoulder and sobbed hysterically. His resentment now gave way to tenderness. Her alarm could only be for his safety—the

thought soothed his chafed spirit—he whispered the fondest expressions of endearment mingled with incoherent apologies for his violence. He ascribed all his faults, as he had done on the evening before, to love and jealousy. When the bare possibility, he said, of loosing her but crossed his imagination, he was no longer an accountable being—he should be ranked with the veriest madman in bedlam! She only sighed in reply, but it was a sigh from which no lover could fail to derive encouragement, nor did it falsely report what was passing in the bosom whence it came. The ardour of Henry's manner, assisted by her late fears for his safety, had driven all prudential considerations from her thoughts, reduced the vanities of wealth to a mere puppet-show, and for the moment at least made all

the bliss of earth seem concentrated in the enthusiastic devotion and actual presence of such a lover. Encouraged by the tremulous tenderness of her sigh, and the gentle quiescence of her manner, Henry ventured to whisper that his leading her from the frequented walk was not altogether accidental, but that driven to distraction by alternate hopes and fears, he had that evening determined at all hazards to make one desperate effort to secure a happiness that it was intoxication even to think of, and would be phrensy to lose—that he had consequently taken the daring step of having a carriage in waiting, which was now not many yards distant. He then entreated her with all the eloquence of wildly excited passion, instead of resenting his audacity to end the cruel doubts which had thus

stung him to madness, and fly with him at once.

"I must not, Henry!" she exclaimed, "indeed I must not—I must not," she repeated. But in fluttering broken accents of tenderness and joy, so encouraging, that the arm which was still round her waist, continued the while with a gentle violence propelling her forward; and so light, so willing, though tremulous were her steps, that the tiny white sattin slippers, twinkling like little stars, scarcely touched the earth.

"Oh! Henry, dear Henry, my mother will be so grieved—my brothers will be so angry! Let us go back—and I will promise you to—to—." But she faltered.

"Never, Louisa, will I trust you out of my sight again, till by the sacred name of wife you are mine for ever!"

The passionate tone of voice in which this was uttered sank into whispers of tenderness. Louisa attempted no reply, but all her remaining scruples vanished, and recklessness of consequences came over her: the whole of life seemed comprised in the present moment—the whole world seemed to contain but herself and her lover. A chariot and four was now visible outside a gateway which they were approaching. They glided through the portals, and Louisa suffered Henry to assist her into the carriage. He sprang in after her—the door was closed—“All right,” said Henry’s man, though begging his pardon it was all very wrong, and off set the horses at their full-speed.

It was some weeks before Louisa remembered the gifts of fortune she had resigned, or Henry.

thought with painful misgivings of the meditated abandonment of him and his love, which he had so strongly suspected before he had been driven to take the violent step we have just described.

What will Tommy Moor say to this, after having declared that *sweetbriar* is the safest fence for the “Garden of Beauty;” nay, that there is more security in it than in the guardianship of that unamiable duenna, the “Dragon of Prudery, placed within call.”

Now, every one knows that the Cheltenham walks are hedged with *sweetbriar*. Perhaps Louisa Arden, not being a daughter of the Emerald Isle, may account for “that wild *sweetbriary fence*” which the poet has pro-

nounced their characteristic barrier, not proving effectual in her case. But to return to our ball.

"I wonder which room Miss Louisa is in," said Sir James to Lady Arden; "I have been looking in all the rooms for her, and I can't find her."

"I hope she is not gone into that foolish lit-up walk," replied her ladyship, looking rather anxiously towards the window. "I am afraid it will give all the young people cold."

"I never thought of that," said Sir James, bustling off.

"I wonder what is become of Louisa," said Mrs. Dorothea, coming up to Lady Arden. "Sir James," she added, calling after the re-

treating baronet, "do bring Louisa here; I want another couple for this quadrille in the next room."

"Oh, yes, I'll bring her if I can find her," said the little man, "but I don't know where she is."

"Where can Louisa be?" said Madeline.

"In the ball-room, I suppose," replied Mr. Cameron. "They were in the refreshment-room."

"Where can Louisa be?" asked Alfred, who was in the ball-room, "my aunt is looking for her."

"In the refreshment-room, I suppose," replied the person questioned.

"What can have become of Louisa?" asked Willoughby, looking round the supper-room.

"My aunt wants her."

“ Is she not in the ball-room ? ” said Geoffrey.”

“ No, I have just come from thence.”

“ Nor in the refreshment-room.”

“ I have not looked there,” and away went Willoughby.

In came poor Sir James, looking very silly.

“ She is not there,” he said, addressing Geoffrey.

“ Who ? ”

“ Why Miss Louisa, she promised to dance the next set with me, and I can’t find her anywhere.”

“ But where have you been looking for her Sir James ? ” asked Geoffery, who never missed an opportunity of quizzing the little baronet.

“ I looked in all the rooms first, and now I

have been to the far end of the lighted walk, up one side and down the other, and I can't find her any where."

"But did you not try any of the dark walks?"

"I never thought of that, but I don't think she'd go there."

"She must be somewhere, Sir James; you say she is not in any of the rooms, nor in the lighted walk, therefore, she must be in one of the dark ones!"

Sir James looking innocently convinced by the force of this logic, replied, "Well I'll go and see," and turned to depart.

"But you can't see in the dark; had you not better take a lantern?"

"I never thought of that," he replied, and making the best of his way into the hall, he

asked every servant and waiter who crossed his path for a lantern to look for Miss Louisa. They all stared at him in turn, and seemed more likely to stumble over him in their bustle, than either to comprehend or grant his request. At length he perceived Sarah in the background, filling her office, as warden of cloaks and boas, and tossed off for the occasion in a net fly cap, quite on the back of her head, to display her innumerable curls; and decorated with bows of pink ribbon full a quarter of a yard long, made stiff with wire in the inside, to give them an enviable resemblance to horns. By her assistance he obtained the illuminator used by Mrs. Dorothea when she was returning home on foot from evening parties; and thus provided, set forth on his voyage of discovery. He was secretly followed at a certain distance

by Geoffery and a knot of wags, who concealed themselves behind trees and shrubs, and when Sir James, holding up the light at the entrance to each dark avenue would cry, "Are you there, Louisa?" they would answer simultaneously in all directions, and in feigned voices of course, "Yes, I am here——" till our puzzled little baronet would stand, looking now before him—now behind him—now on the one side—now on the other, literally not knowing which way to turn, to the infinite amusement of his hidden tormentors, to whom he was, with his lantern, a conspicuous object, whilst they, in their various dark retreats, were invisible to him.

CHAPTER XIII.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that Sir James's researches proved fruitless.

By the time he returned to the house the alarm was becoming serious. Indeed it was beginning to be an ascertained thing, not only that Louisa was missing, but that Henry Lindsey had also disappeared, which latter circumstance afforded a solution of the young lady's absence by no means agreeable to her family. The news spread quickly, and every one was looking amazingly amused, except they hap-

pended to meet the eye of Lady Arden or Mrs. Dorothea, when they thought it necessary to quench their smiles; and if they were particular friends, add a few inches to the length of their faces.

It was now very late, and the rooms were thinning fast, though many were induced to delay their departure by the spur and zest which so fair an opportunity of making ill-natured comments had given to conversation. Yet who can say that we do not live in a good-natured considerate world, when we can assert, as an incontestable fact, that poor little Sir James, as soon as it was whispered about that his intended bride had gone off with his brother, received the sweetest possible smiles from several young ladies, who had scarcely taken any notice of him ever since his engagement

had been generally known. What but the most generous compassion for the forsaken baronet could have dictated so sudden a change of manner.

Had it not been for this untoward accident, Mrs. Dorothea would have insisted on setting up another and another quadrille, *ad infinitum*; for the pride of a dance is in how late you can keep it up, however tired of it host and hostess, chaperons, musicians, and dancing gentlemen may be; as to young ladies, they are never tired of dancing, except they *don't dance*.

Mrs. Dorothea, however, now courteseyed to her retreating guests with an anxious countenance, and an absent manner, without making any attempt to dissuade them from *running away*, as she would have designated their departure, but for the real *run away*, which caused her

very serious uneasiness: first on her niece's account, and secondly on her own; for she was mortified beyond expression to think that her grand party, which had cost her so much trouble, and would cost her so much money, should have been so sadly broken up.

She need not however, good lady, so far as her party was concerned, have afflicted herself; for it was pronounced the next day to have been so enlivened by the elopement that it was quite delightful.

Willoughby and Alfred, having ascertained that a chariot and four, the horses' heads to the east, had been seen driving off from the Montpelier gates the night before at a furious rate, set out in pursuit on the road thus indicated. They soon, however, lost all traces of the fugitives, and after an absence of two or three days,

returned to Cheltenham. Lady Arden had by this time received a letter announcing the marriage, and begging pardon, and so forth. There was therefore nothing more to be done, and Wiloughby accordingly repaired to Lady Palliser's, to inquire after the health of Caroline. As he crossed the little lawn, he observed great ladders set up against the front of the house, and persons within and without apparently employed in cleaning the windows. The hall door was open, and a slatternly looking woman, not the least like a servant, on the steps, washing them down and rubbing them white with a stone. He knocked, and another woman, who was crossing the hall at the moment, armed with a broom and a duster, threw them aside, came forward, and asked him if he was wanting the lodgings. "They will not be quite ready for coming into

before twelve o'clock to-morrow," she continued, without waiting for a reply; then fancying that Willoughby looked disappointed, she added, " If you're particular about coming in to-night, sir, I'll set more hands to work, and see what can be done ; but the family only left this morning, and they kept so many servants, that there is no saying all there's to do after them ; for as for servants, as I *sais*, they always makes more work than three masters, or their mistresses either, which was the cause why I was endeavouring to assist a little myself just with dusting the book-shelves."

" Has Lady Palliser then left Cheltenham, or only changed her house ?" asked Willoughby.

" Oh left Cheltenham, sir. Her ladyship was not likely to change from my house while

she staid, if it had been seven years. Indeed, situation and all, where could she be so well, except it were next door, which also belongs to me. Sixteen guineas a week, sir, is the lowest farthing I can take ! Indeed they should have been twenty, but you seem such a nice civil spoken gentleman that ——”

“ Thank you,” interrupted Willoughby, “ I don’t want the house ; it was Lady Palliser I was inquiring for.”

“ And where were your eyes that you didn’t see the bill on the window ; as if I’d nothing to do but stand talking to you !” and away she flounced.

During Caroline’s protracted illness, Willoughby had had some uncomfortable misgivings ; not that he had confessed his feelings even

to himself, yet he had thought that during convalescence, he might have been permitted to see a lady to whom he now considered himself betrothed. True, he had frequently been admitted, and been received very graciously by Lady Palliser; and on such occasions he had tried to feel satisfied with the excuse that Caroline had not yet been able to quit her room. He had addressed to Caroline very many and very tender *billet doux*; to all of which he had received very gracious and encouraging replies, though written by Lady Palliser, to spare, as he supposed, the invalid the fatigue of being her own amanuensis. This was all perfectly proper, yet though he told himself so again and again, he could not help feeling that some more direct communication would be much more satisfactory.

So sudden a recovery as was implied by this journey, undertaken too during the few days of his absence, seemed so strange, that every painful feeling was instantly increased ten-fold. Yet he knew not what to apprehend; suspense, however, becoming wholly intolerable, he resolved to set out immediately for —shire. He did so within an hour, but without communicating any of his doubts or fears even to Alfred. As soon as Willoughby had set off, Alfred also hastened to quit Cheltenham, where every object, and every circumstance, which used formerly to yield him delight, was fraught with the most miserable associations.

He went to Arden; nor could he have chosen a better retreat: for the instantaneous effect of a sight of its well-known scenes was for a time to give to the feelings and affections of childhood

and boyhood a most salutary preponderance over the newer and more vivid, but far less uniformly happy sensations of the last few months.

CHAPTER XIV.

LADY Arden, about the same time, set out for her house in town, accompanied by Madeline, her only remaining daughter. Mrs. Dorothea, thus left alone, began to ponder on the prudential step of breaking up an establishment, which she found much too expensive for her means—more so, infinitely, than she had anticipated. For it so happened, that her maid-of-all-work cook, whom she took with the house, was one of a set, who not being sufficiently reputable to get places in private

families, are frequently employed by speculators in furnished houses, to take charge of the same when vacant, living on their wits the while, and on their lodgers when they can get them. Moreover she belonged to a club for supplying servants out of place with broken meat. Poor Mrs. Dorothea, therefore, was sadly puzzled about the consumption in her kitchen. At last she ventured to consult her confidential abigail, Sarah.

Servants, however, though they had been pulling caps five minutes before, always stand by each other in the grand common cause—defence of extravagance! Sarah, therefore, assuming an expression of countenance, in which sauciness and sulkiness were combined, replied,

“ You can’t expect to be much of a judge,

ma'am, not being used to housekeeping; I'm sure I never see no waste; but people must have enough to eat of something."

"I am far from wishing any person under my roof not to have sufficient to eat," replied Mrs. Dorothea, with offended dignity, "but I certainly expected of you, Sarah, that you would not see me imposed upon by lodging-house servants."

"I never seen you imposed upon, ma'am; but you seem to forget that you've got a man now to feed. Where there is a man, there's no end to the consumption; in particular butcher's meat, and they will have it. Its no place of mine, however, to see the larder, and I am not a going to get myself mobbed, meddling with other servants."

Sarah was ordered to leave the room, and

send the cook. There had been a shoulder of mutton at the table the day before, in which Mrs. Dorothea had made the usual first gash with the carving-knife, intending to help herself, but changed her mind; the meat had, of course, separated a little, as in a shoulder it always does.

"You have the cold mutton for your own dinners," commenced Mrs. Dorothea: the servants dined some hours before she did.

"The mutton, ma'am!" repeated Jones, such was the cook's name, "I believe John picked the bone for his breakfast: but, really, the joint was so severely cut in the parlour that I didn't think it worth looking after."

Mrs. Dorothea explained; but jerks of the chin were all the satisfaction she could obtain.

Jones's blotted account of the last sove-

reign she had had for small expenses was given in.

Mrs. Jones would have made a good M. P., for her hand was as illegible as it was large. The first item in the account certainly seemed to be a bag of ground salt for the bird. The canary having been added to the establishment only the beginning of the last week, Mrs. Dorothea was obliged to enquire what this meant.

"Groundsel, ma'am, for the bird; I paid a boy for gathering some, you can't get people to do things for nothing." This was not the only expense the bird had occasioned—he was the alleged cause of a great additional consumption in many things: eggs for boiling hard, bread for crumbling into his tea, white sugar for sticking between the wires of his

cage, &c. &c. &c.; while there was a charge for bird-seed every second day, half a pound each time. So much for the bird. The charge for soap had always been enormous, but this week it was twice as much as usual. Mrs. Dorothea remonstrated: "You told me," she said, "that the reason you had used so much soap hitherto, was, that there were so few glass towels, that you were obliged to wash them continually; I got a dozen new ones accordingly, and here is more soap than ever charged."

"It stands to reason, ma'am, where there is more linen, it must take more soap to wash it," answered Jones, with the coolest effrontery possible; and having, of course, no change to return out of the sovereign, she retired to the kitchen, to pronounce her mistress the *most*

meanest lady she had ever met with—indeed no lady at all ; to grudge people the mouthfuls of meat they had earned, and the poor bird its two or three seeds ; but what was worse than all, she wouldn't have them to wash their hands, for fear of using a bit of soap.

“ Considering the difference a canary bird has made,” thought Mrs. Dorothea, “ it is a fortunate circumstance that I was not persuaded to add an errand-boy to my establishment, as Jones so much wished.” Jones, by some sort of accident, happened to have a son of eight or nine years old, whom, of course, she wished to see provided for.

If one could but afford it, proceeded Mrs. Dorothea, I don’t know a greater luxury than the peace of allowing oneself to be plundered without seeming to see it. Mrs. Dorothea had

had so much experience of the discomforts of lodgings, that she had entertained some thoughts of trying a boarding-house; indeed she had dined at one, one day of the last week, by way of seeing how she should like the kind of thing; but the company had been so different from the refined society she had been living among lately at Lady Arden's, that she had felt quite uncomfortable. Her neighbour on one side had entertained the party in a loud, almost angry voice, the whole time of dinner, with accounts of accidents on rail-roads; she heard afterwards that he was a great holder of canal shares. Her neighbour on her other hand had quite disgusted her, by eating of every dish at table; at the same time that he had made her laugh, by mentioning to her, in confidence, as a sort of apology for his gluttony, that never

having been much out of his own part of the country before, he wished while in such a fine new fangled place to get all the insight into the world he could. And after all, if eating a certain number of dinners give a knowledge of the law, why should not eating a certain number of dishes give a knowledge of the world.

After this essay Mrs. Dorothea had given up the idea of a boarding-house. She had even began to turn her thoughts again towards her old lodging with the good carpet. Winter was now coming on and the heat of the oven would no longer be an objection. And she could stand out for the sofa, and the key to the chiffonier, and the drops to the chimney-lights, before she went into the lodging at all. To be sure the new carpet, that had made the

room look so respectable, might be getting faded by this time ; she would step in, however the next day and see how it looked, and inquire what the set could be had for during the winter months. As she formed this resolve a vague remembrance of past annoyances came over her mind, producing a sense of the utmost dreariness.

It was getting dusk, for she did not dine till six, and while she sat looking at the fire the days of her youth returned. She dwelt on the thoughts of Arden Park, then her home, and of her father's princely establishment. Now all belonged to her nephew ; while she was an outcast, almost hated, because she could not afford to be cheated ; and paying more than the half of her small income for a single sitting

room, not so good as that in which at Arden her own maid used to sit at needle-work. At this moment the train of her reflections was interrupted by a voice of complaint under her window. She looked out. It was raining, but there was still twilight sufficient to discern a poor creature sitting on the ground, and looking through the iron railing in at the kitchen-window, where the light for cooking made the preparations for dinner visible. The poor woman, was miserably clad ! and, from her accent, Irish. She was eloquently appealing to the compassion of the cook, while she carried in her hand, as a sort of shield against the vigilance of English policemen, a bundle of matches to sell, worth perhaps one half-penny.

"Ye that's warm and well fed yonder, pity
the poor crathur could and wet and has'nt broke
her fast this blessed day!"

The cook's shrill voice was heard in a key of
reproach.

"Oh, mistress," proceeded the mendicant,
"but it ill becomes the face that the fire's
shining upon and the mate roasting before, to
look round in anger on the desolate. Sure I
wouldn't be troubling you here in the could
this night if I had a hearth or a home of my
own to go to!"

Mrs. Dorothea was struck with compassion
for the poor wanderer. She opened the window,
handed her money from it, and ringing the
bell ordered her to have some dinner. "What
a cheerful thing fire-light is!" she thought, as

she resumed her seat, unconsciously made happy by the performance of a good action. She now remembered her late murmuring thoughts with shame, as she contrasted her own situation with that of the really destitute and became conscious that the source of her discontent was not any actual deprivation, but *pride*, a pride too, fostered into supernatural growth by the constant contemplation of the wealth and splendour belonging to the head of her own family. "If I could but afford to retain such a home as this," she thought, "how truly happy I might think myself. However, the poorest lodging I am at all likely to get into is a better shelter than many of my fellow creatures possess; let me not, therefore, murmur!"

A dapper double rap here startled her from her reverie. "Who could be calling at so late an hour?"

A gentleman entered whom Mrs. Dorothea had never seen before. He apologized for being so late. He had been detained by a client from the country, and had a journey to perform at an early hour in the morning. The writings had not been completed till that day, and he feared that before his return Mrs. Arden might have had the unnecessary trouble of moving from a house which was now her own freehold property. He then explained, that by order of Sir Willoughby Arden he had effected the purchase of the premises, with the fixtures, furniture, &c. &c., every thing as it stood; and was instructed to present

her with the deeds, which accordingly he did.

This was, as may be well believed, welcome news to Mrs. Dorothea. She was thus not only comfortably settled in the home she liked so much, but rendered for her quite a rich woman; as her income, hitherto so insufficient, would, now that she was relieved from her heaviest expense—rent, be ample for all her other wants.

Willoughby, the most liberal and generous of mortals in money matters, had frequently heard his sisters talk over Aunt Dorothea's adventures in lodgings, and lament that she could not afford to keep her nice pretty house which suited her so well. He had, in consequence given the orders we have just seen executed,

and from a feeling of delicacy had said nothing of his kind intentions, which had thus invested the transaction with the character of an agreeable surprise.

CHAPTER XV.

WHILE Willoughby is travelling towards Lady Palliser's, or rather Lady Caroline Montague's magnificent country seat, we shall endeavour to account for some of those contradictory circumstances and inconsistencies of manner which to him seemed so unaccountable; or rather for which he was so unwilling to account by that solution which yet pressed itself upon his judgment as most probable.

Caroline, though from her extreme timidity the worst of actresses, had yet ventured to form

a vaguely conceived plan, for the execution of which she hoped one time or other to summon courage. In the mean while, perhaps unconsciously, the thoughts which were passing in her mind affected her manners, and sometimes even the expression of her countenance, and thus led to the most fatal misconstruction of her sentiments. Her total ignorance of the world, too, occasioned by that want of communication with any one older than herself already mentioned, as one of the evil results of her mother's harsh and heartless system of education, rendered tenfold the dangers of her difficult situation.

Lady Palliser had informed her daughter that she meant to marry her to Sir Willoughby Arden. Caroline's attempt to remonstrate had been silenced, as usual, with the most tyran-

nical violence. What was to be done?—poor Caroline felt quite unequal to open opposition: she had recourse accordingly to the dangerous expedient alluded to. She resolved to make a friend of Sir Willoughby; and the first time that by a declaration of his sentiments he gave her an opportunity of speaking on such a subject, to cast herself on his compassion, and entreat him to withdraw his addresses, without making it known to her mother that she had rejected him. This it was which gave to her manner that gentle acquiescence in his attentions, and especially that willingness to listen, which it is impossible to define, but which is, above all things, encouraging to a lover. And this it was which at Lady Arden's ball had produced the scene of misunderstanding, from which Willoughby reappeared in the dancing

room with a countenance so delighted. The interview in the veranda had commenced by some lover-like speeches, which, while they could not be misunderstood, did not absolutely call for reply: and Caroline, unwilling to seem too ready to comprehend, became uneasy and anxious, but yet did not speak. The ardour of Willoughby's manner increased; more than once Caroline moved her lips to commence her difficult task, but no sound proceeded from them; while every moment she grew more miserably conscious that her silence would be—must be misconstrued. At length, by way of exordium, she murmured a few scarcely audible words, thanking him for his flattering preference; but what she wished to add required so much courage—so much explanation, that she knew not how to proceed. She faltered, and

became silent; and while striving to find words in which to recommence, she suffered so intensely from the tumult of her agitation, that she lost much of the purport of the enthusiastic declarations of attachment which Willoughby was now pouring forth. When he began, however, to talk of his gratitude for the favourable hearing she had granted him, she felt the necessity of speaking, and in fearful trepidation commenced: "The—the confidence I—I am about to place in—in you, Sir Willoughby——"

"Will never be abused by me," he exclaimed, with fervour.

"I—I fear—" she recommenced, colouring, stammering, and withdrawing her hand gently, but in the utmost confusion. At this moment several other couples, who seemed to have just

discovered the veranda, entered from different windows almost simultaneously.

" May I then call to-morrow morning ?" said Willoughby, in a hasty whisper, " and be permitted to——"

" Yes ; but speak to me alone !" she replied, resolving that to-morrow she would make the painful explanation, now more than ever necessary. It was on their returning to the dancing-room at this juncture, that Alfred had remarked the delighted expression of Willoughby's countenance.

The last injunction of Caroline, to speak to her alone, sounded odd ; but surely it was kind and encouraging. The whole interview, in short, amounted to as favourable a reception of his now fully declared passion as he could desire. In the course of the evening he found an oppor-

tunity in an aside conversation with Lady Palliser, of expressing his rapturous hopes, and alluding to the visit he was to pay by permission on the next morning.

The ball concluded—the morning arrived—and Lady Palliser at breakfast told her daughter that she was happy to find from Sir Willoughby, that she had shown a proper sense of obedience, in accepting the offer of his hand, which he had made her the evening before.

Poor Caroline's attempt at manœuvring was thus entirely defeated. She had, as we have stated, resolved to entreat Sir Willoughby, by withdrawing his addresses apparently of his own accord, to shelter her from the rage of her mother; but she was quite unprepared for taking herself an active part in the deception, and maintaining that part by bold and decided

falsehood: completely thrown off her guard, she exclaimed with fervour, "Oh no, no! he has entirely misunderstood me; I feared he had, but I have not accepted him—I never can—I never will accept him!"

"Do you dare assert that you will not obey my commands?" said Lady Palliser, rising, and assuming that fierceness of aspect before which our heroine habitually trembled.

Caroline sunk on her knees, and promising never to listen to any one of whom her mother did not approve, only intreated permission to remain single.

Lady Palliser was well aware that her daughter might at her leisure command many much more splendid matches than the one now in agitation; but in the first place she was determined, from the spirit of tyranny, to be obeyed;

added to which there was a second motive, which though too contemptible to be confessed even to herself, had no doubt a certain influence on her present conduct.

The time had been when the loveliness of the infant, held on the knee purposely for effect, had added interest to the matured and lustrous charms of the beautiful mother: but now that mother and daughter had become two distinct objects, and that the eye of the beholder not unfrequently passed with hasty indifference over the still striking countenance of the former, to pause in evident delight on the fresher charms of the latter, an irksome sense of secret mortification incessantly assailed Lady Palliser. In childhood she had treated Caroline with harshness, from the united effect of a worthless nature, and a mistaken plan of education; but now

the constant proximity of one who was the innocent cause of the diminution of those triumphs which had hitherto formed the sole charm of her existence, was becoming irksome to her; and awaking feelings closely allied to angry aversion! And therefore it was though, as we have said, she would have blushed to have confessed it to her own heart, that her ladyship was impatient to rid herself of annoyances such as these; of, in short, the meek unconscious rival who was, notwithstanding, the only being that had ever disputed with her the reign of vanity she had so long enjoyed, and even still felt that she recovered whenever she appeared in public without her daughter. For it must be allowed that her ladyship's beauty was at the very time of which we speak, still of so striking and splendid a character, that it lost little by comparison

with any loveliness but that of Caroline, whose similarity of feature seemed to render the advantageous dissimilarities of extreme youth and infinite superiority of expression peculiarly conspicuous.

CHAPTER XVI.

LADY Palliser was inexorable, and Wiloughby's knock being heard, while our heroine was still at her feet, she commanded her to retire to her own apartment and remain there till prepared to render implicit obedience to her commands.

The lover on his entrance was told with the sweetest smiles imaginable, that Caroline had taken cold the evening before, and was unable to leave her room. He was, however, encouraged to make known his sentiments and his

wishes to Lady Palliser, who both accepted his proposals on the part of her daughter, and in the most gracious manner possible pronounced her own approval of his suit. Then followed the arrangement respecting the visit to * * shire, and the tour on the continent, &c. mere manœuvres of her ladyship's to gain time, in case Caroline should prove untractable.

All this, it may be remembered, Willoughby mentioned to his brother on his return from his morning visit already described. His not having seen Caroline herself, however, he suppressed ; he felt he knew not why, an insuperable objection to mention the circumstance ; not that he deduced from it at the time a doubt of his happiness, of which he felt he thought perfectly secure. He longed, it is true, for evening, and could not help thinking that

his felicity would be still more complete when his fate had been pronounced by Caroline's own lips; yet surely the night before in the veranda she had accepted him quite as explicitly as young ladies generally do. His disappointment again that evening annoyed him very much; and during our heroine's protracted illness, the anxiety it was natural he should feel respecting her state of health, was mingled at times with gloomy apprehensions, which had yet another and a more agitating source.

At length he left Cheltenham as we have seen for Montague House. His last interview with our heroine herself was that already described as having taken place in the veranda on the night of Lady Arden's ball.

The secret of Caroline having never since

been visible, was, that she still continued to resist Lady Palliser's tyrannical commands, while her ladyship, astonished at conduct so unparalleled, on the part of her hitherto submissive child, and unaccustomed to be baffled, was more than ever determined that she should finally yield.

Accordingly she had put off the lover from day to day with promises and excuses which yet she scarcely expected him to believe, and with which in fact she cared very little after all, whether he was or was not satisfied, being with her usual whimsical inconsistency fully prepared, whenever he refused to play *blind-man's-buff*, as she called it, any longer, to laugh excessively and turn the whole affair into an excellent jest. In the mean time she derived

quite as much gratification from the amusement of quizzing Willoughby, as from the prospect of tyrannizing over her daughter.

For it was a part of Lady Palliser's character, which was as absurd as it was worthless, to think it exceedingly witty to succeed in deceiving any body, though by the gravest, and therefore of course the dullest lie imaginable: we mean in the April-fool style, not vulgar business lying—that would have been out of her line.

On Willoughby's arrival at Montague House, Lady Palliser, though scarcely able to keep her countenance, attempted to carry on the farce by saying, that she had removed her daughter in the hope that change of air might prove beneficial, but that she was still unable to leave her room. This went on for a day or

two, during which her ladyship, more than ever anxious to carry her point, because now getting tired of the business, treated the still inflexible Caroline with great harshness. The third morning, a female servant, who had evidently watched her opportunity, entered with great caution the breakfast-room where Willoughby was alone, and handing him a letter vanished again. He read the epistle, turned deadly pale, gasped for breath, read it again, rose, paced the apartment, stopped, looked wildly round him, threw open a window, the room being on the ground floor, and rushed into the lawn. It is difficult to say what he might have done, or whither directed his steps, had he not perchance encountered his groom, who had been exercising his horses and was bringing them home.

With a vague idea that it was necessary to affect perfect composure, Willoughby waved to the man to stop, and his signal being obeyed, walked quietly to the side of the led horse, and laying his hand on its neck, raised a foot as if with the intention of mounting ; the absence of the stirrup however rendering the movement abortive, he stood for a moment looking confused

"Shall I saddle him, sir?" enquired the groom.

"Do," replied Willoughby, with the air of one relieved from a great embarrassment, and walking on as he spoke.

"Where will you please to mount, sir?" asked the servant, following a step or two, with his hand to his hat.

After a few moments employed in recalling

ideas, which had evidently already gone forth on some far distant execution, Willoughby answered, "Any where."

John, as the best mode in his judgment, of obeying commands so far from explicit, returned to the stable, exchanged the body cloths of the animals for the saddles, and following in the direction he had seen his master take, soon overtook him, walking slowly on the side of the road, with his arms folded, and his head uncovered. John had before observed that Willoughby was without his hat, and had been thoughtful enough to bring it with him. He now presented it, then held the horse; Willoughby put on the hat, mounted the animal and rode on, followed by John, without a word being spoken on either side: nor was it till they had performed one stage of their journey towards

Arden, and were lodged at an inn, that John ventured so far to obtrude himself upon the evident abstraction of his master, as to enquire if they were going home. He received an answer in the affirmative; on which he made bold to ask further, whether Sir Willoughby had left orders with the other servants to follow with the carriage, &c. To this enquiry he received a reply, first in the negative, then in the affirmative, and again finally in the negative.

On which he begged permission to dispatch a line to the coachman himself. He stood ten minutes without obtaining any answer, and then taking silence for consent, proceeded to do as he had suggested.

The exertion of mind necessary to comprehend and reply to John's queries, or even a part of them, seemed to recall Willoughby to

some recollection of the duties he had himself to perform. He must write to Lady Palliser—he must account for his abrupt departure. That he might do so in strict compliance with the request contained in the letter of this morning, he applied himself to the reperusal of the epistle which had already caused him so much affliction. It was, as our readers have probably anticipated, from Caroline. Driven to desperation by her mother's perseverance in her determination of marrying her to Sir Willoughby, and terrified by her violence, which at every interview increased, she was at length compelled to conquer all the timid reluctance she felt to take what to her seemed the boldest of steps, and address to Sir Willoughby the letter we have seen him receive in so frantic a manner.

After a hesitating, and almost unmeaning

commencement, consisting of broken sentences, and awkward apologies, she went on to say : “ Yet if I would avoid calling down upon myself your just resentment, by appearing in your eyes to be guilty of the most unjustifiable caprice ; I must I fear relate a circumstance which —I have been so unwilling to mention, that—I have—I know—in consequence—delayed this explanation much too long. But before your arrival in Cheltenham, before ever our acquaintance had even commenced, I had promised to—to—accept—the hand of—of—Mr. Arden, your brother ; and though by my mother’s positive command, I was compelled the next day to withdraw that promise, I cannot—I never can—I am sure too—you will think.—But I know I express myself very badly—very confusedly, yet I hope you will see—at least that my being

quite—quite unable ever to enter into the engagements my mother has wished to form for me, does not proceed from any caprice or change of mind on my part, or any want of gratitude for the flattering regard with which you have so kindly honoured me.

“ What I now entreat of your compassion is, that you who have nothing to fear from my mother’s anger, would generously interpose yourself between me and a storm, before the very thought of which I tremble till my hand can scarcely hold the pen with which I attempt to write.

“ I know I ought to have made this explanation long since, but a foolish, a culpable fearfulness, made me ever ready to believe no opportunity a fitting one. At Lady Arden’s

ball I did attempt it, but we were interrupted; so that I only made things much worse. I was so confused too, I was glad of the respite. I thought I could say what I have now written, when you should call the next morning;—but on that occasion my mother interfered, and has never since allowed me to see you."

On finishing Caroline's letter for the second time, Willoughby, in a sort of desperation, wrote a hurried scrawl to Lady Palliser, towards whom he felt strong resentment for the deception she had practised. His epistle was written in strange incoherent language, but its general purport was that he considered himself trifled with in having been so long debarred from seeing Lady Caroline Montague; and in consequence, begged leave to withdraw his addressees

finally. Nor was the truth in this much disguised, for he felt that had he been permitted to see Caroline from the first he should much sooner have been undeceived.

CHAPTER XVII.

With a trembling hand, and apparently in the utmost haste, Willoughby folded and sealed the letter he had just finished ; and without allowing himself one moment for reflection, rang and ordered the person who appeared to take it to the post-office immediately.

As the door closed, however, after the servant to whom he had given this command, a sense of terror at having thus himself rendered his fate irremediable, overwhelmed him ; and, with an instinctive impulse, he grasped at the bell, but

immediately flinging it from him, he assumed a mock composure, and as though there had been some one present before whom to act a part, with a ghastly sort of smile, seated himself. He had for some time been almost expecting, though he would not confess it to his own thoughts, some such blow as this : he had seen, despite every effort to avert his mental vision from the view, that all could not be right ; and, weary of secret dread—the true definition of that hope deferred, which maketh the heart sick—he now fancied, for the moment, that there was a sort of stern satisfaction in knowing that fate had done its worst. His brain, however, was already beginning to wander; he was already contemplating, though vaguely, the fatal step which finally ended his career. He thought of Alfred, and his soul secretly yearned for the consolation of

pouring out all its sorrows into his affectionate bosom ; but *Pride*, under the form of wounded vanity, with a jealous soreness, shrank from the salutary exposure ; while so irritable was the state of his mind, that the very pleadings of his own heart, for the balm it longed for, seemed importunate, and were resisted with something of his characteristic obstinacy. Nay, the pettiest and most contemptible considerations from time to time blended themselves indistinctly with his despair, and became, to a certain degree, governing motives of conduct.

The story of his former disappointment, and of such recent occurrence too, he reflected, with a very disproportionate share of uneasiness, would now be renewed, coupled with the present affair : he should become a proverb—a by-word—an object for the finger of scorn to point

at. Then the wild excitement of the hope with which, despite his fears, he had with strange inconsistency fed his passion ; this was gone, and he could not endure the void within ; while it was upon the brain, the fever seemed to feed. Whether there was a physical cause for this, such as Alfred had sometimes feared ; or whether the attachment, though violent, being recently formed, still dwelt more in the imagination than in the heart, it might be difficult to decide ; but the effect on Willoughby was that some active principle of misery and evil seemed urging him on to a frantic resistance of his fate ; compelling his very pulses to beat at a maddening pace ; causing an alternation of quickened and suspended breathing, which fatigued him sensibly ; and the while presenting to his imagination, snatches of thoughts, and visions of projects so terrific,

that while they were in fact the effects of incipient insanity, they became, in their turn, by the fearful excitement they produced, powerful causes of its future development. There was still an inward struggle, but it ended fatally. He could not—no, he never would pronounce her name again! He—in whom else he would have confided every thought—he it was who was preferred ; and, though he could not feel a rival's hatred towards his kind, his generous, his unoffending brother—no, he did not, he would not even love him less ; but still there was a remembrance that he was his rival ; and with it thoughts, strangely blended, of littleness, and the wildest, most extravagant generosity. Alfred should have all—love, wealth, title ; and then Lady Palliser could no longer object ; but he must wait—it might be for a few days, perhaps only

a few hours—nay, the sooner the better; why should he live but to cause and to endure misery? Endure!—did he endure? Can powerlessness to resist the decrees of fate, while yet the heart and feelings openly and wilfully rebel against them, be called endurance? Certainly not. But alas, such rebellion brings with it its own punishment. How often had Willoughby, while fearing the worst, inwardly vowed that were he indeed destined to disappointment, he would never survive the blow. Now the blow had fallen, and though his heart secretly turned towards his habitual, his earliest, his deepest seated affection, the love he bore his twin brother, he was pledged, as it were, to resist every gentler emotion, to embrace despair! and unhappily he did so.

He would carefully conceal every circum-

stance, every thought ; he would allow it to be believed, that the preparations for his marriage were still going forward ; nay, he would assume the most exuberant spirits, and to the last moment of existence preserve his fatal secret. When he was gone, when he had found a resting-place for his weary spirit in the grave, Alfred should know all ! Reflecting thus, he journeyed on.

Lady Palliser at first took no notice of Sir Willoughby's sudden departure. At a late hour in the evening, however, she received his note. During its perusal she laughed immoderately, then flinging it towards Caroline, said, "Silly young man ! my only object in marrying you to him was to chastise you for your improper conduct. It has happened, however, quite as well ; for I was getting amazingly

tired of the thing. Let the intended punishment," she added, with returning severity of manner, "be a lesson to you, that young women in your station, and with the fortune you will possess, are not to make choice for themselves. When I choose you to marry, and have decided to whom I shall marry you, I shall let you know."

Poor Caroline, how little understood was her position by those, and they were many, the springs of whose peace were poisoned by envy of her greatness! Oh *Pride*, bane of human happiness! mingling bitter mortification in the otherwise palatable cup of humble competency, and lading with its glittering chains, the slaves on whom it seems to heap its choicest gifts.

Caroline, who had apprehended a storm of rage and disappointment, heightened by, per-

haps, some suspicion of the truth, was greatly relieved; and, though habituated to the unaccountable caprices of her mother's temper, was somewhat surprised, at the perfect indifference thus shown by Lady Palliser, respecting her ultimate failure on a point, to carry which, so violent a determination had previously been manifested.

On Willoughby's arrival at Arden, he strained every power of his mind to hide from his brother the true state of his feelings; and, to a certain degree, succeeded; his strange manner inducing in Alfred a belief that it was the immediate prospect of the fulfilment of his wishes, which had unsettled his intellect; for, that it was to a certain degree unsettled, this affectionate brother could not help detecting, in

the extravagance, the sometimes almost terrific wildness, of the gaiety assumed by Willoughby. It is impossible to describe the wretchedness of Alfred, while with an aching heart, he watched the flushed cheek and flashing eye of his brother, and listened to the strange unnatural sound of his laugh. We may say, without in the slightest degree exaggerating the disinterestedness of our hero, that every thought of self was forgotten, in the miserable excess of sympathy which the extraordinary circumstances of others now called forth. It was not only for his brother, that brother to whom from infancy he had been so tenderly attached, that he now felt the cruellest apprehensions; but what was also to be the fate of Caroline, and what would be the misery of their mother,

the sorrow of the whole family, if, indeed, the awful infliction he had so long dreaded, had at length fallen upon them ?

Or even, were this excitement which now alarmed him so much, to subside again for the present, how dreadful was the prospect opened by its having ever assumed so serious a form ; and the inconsistency of Willoughby's conduct and manner, the incoherence of his expressions in his ill-sustained attempts at conversation, put the fatal truth beyond a doubt. Yet, were all those symptoms so far to abate, that no eye less watchful, less practised to watch than his own, could detect the lurking malady, was it fair, was it honourable, to involve in so frightful a family affliction, the happiness of a being as yet unconscious of it ? Yet who could, who would, who ought to interfere ? Delicacy

and all good feeling for ever forbade that any surmise should proceed from him. Oh impossible! quite impossible! Fate must roll on, and overwhelm whom it would, he must be passive! But he was more: instinctively he strove to conceal from servants, and the few country neighbours whom chance threw in their way, the hourly increasing infirmity of his brother; treating, while such were present, his extravagance as hilarity, and every contradiction and inconsistency as an intended jest; adding thus the while, by the violent and unnatural contrast to his own secret sufferings.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ALFRED sometimes thought that possibly he ought so far to conquer his scruples as to write to his mother, and communicate to her, in strict confidence, his apprehensions respecting the state of Willoughby's mind: but he might recover after a short period of quiet, and then his mother might be spared the pang: and he could not, as he had before decided, even within the bosom of his own family,—he could not, be the consequence what it might, bring himself to be the first to suggest such a thought. His

mother, of course, would not suspect him of a base desire to grasp at his brother's birth-right, and of a consequent quickeftness in discerning the approaches of this frightful visitation ; but there were those who might so misjudge him. It was, however, he thought, at least his duty to prepare his mother's mind in some degree for whatever might be the result, by saying, that he did not think Willoughby quite well : this, therefore, he did in one or two of his letters. Yet Willoughby himself made no complaint ; and to servants and occasional visitors appeared to be in particularly good health and spirits. We remark this now because the comment subsequently becomes important.

After a few days, however, Willoughby, like one who had run at full speed as long as

his strength would permit, flagged ; his efforts were first less sustained, then his gaiety became confined to wild bursts of noisy mirth, while at length whole hours, with a seeming unconsciousness of the lapse of time, were passed in gloomy abstraction. The bursts of seeming mirth, however, were always assumed when servants or strangers were present ; the gloom and abstraction given way to only when alone with his brother.

Willoughby had always felt, and often expressed, great horror of persons being opened after death : to this subject he now recurred with a frequency, and clung to it with a pertinacity quite extraordinary ; adding the most solemn injunctions to Alfred to be the protector of his remains whenever he should die.

“ You will then be master here,” he would

say ; "every thing will then be yours ; my very body I bequeath to you—I make it your property : do not, Alfred, I conjure you, suffer the defenceless corse of your poor brother to be mangled. It would be hard indeed," he would sometimes subjoin, with a wild ironical laugh, "if a man could not find rest even in the grave."

On occasions like these Alfred would sit beside him, and endeavour to sooth him by every kind and rational argument he could devise ; not unfrequently Willoughby would appear entirely deaf to all that could be urged ; while at other times, he would take Alfred's hand, thank him with gentle kindness of manner, and hope that he might yet be as truly happy as he deserved to be ; joining with this latter expression an earnest and expressive solemnity which

almost seemed a blending of prophecy with the prayer of affection. He often talked of having a foreboding that he should die young.

"But why, my dear brother," Alfred would reply, "give way to such thoughts? Why should you die young? You have no ailment, no care, no sorrow——"

"It may be a silly fancy, yet I am possessed with the idea:"—this much Willoughby said with well-acted carelessness. "My only anxiety in dying," he added, with a suddenly altered tone, and an inquiring look of the most mournful tenderness, "is for you, Alfred; I fear you will feel it severely; but do not!—do not! Why should any one be miserable?—I shall not be missed, except by you: no selfish happiness, I know, will enable you entirely to forget me. My mother is kind, very kind; but you

were always her favourite—and that in time, will reconcile her—”

Caroline was in Alfred's thoughts; her name even trembled on his lips, but he had not courage to give it utterance.

“ You speak wildly,” he said, “ my dear Willoughby; you not missed! you—who—who—you who love and are beloved.” Willoughby laid his hand on Alfred's, and looked anxiously in his face for some moments, but continued silent; at length he moved his lips, as if about to speak; then pressing his brother's hand, dropped it, and exclaimed, “ I cannot!—I cannot!” An instant after he burst into a passion of tears, and laying his head on Alfred's shoulder, wept like a child, till relieved by giving way to his feelings, though completely exhausted, he seemed to sleep. In a few seconds,

however, he started, looked up, and repeated anxiously once or twice, "What have I been saying, Alfred? what have I been saying? I think I have been asleep," he added; "but I have lately got into a strange habit of laying awake the whole night: it is merely a habit. Sleep is altogether a habit, I think. I don't sleep at all now, as I tell you; and yet you see I am perfectly well!"

Alfred looked mournfully at him, and replied, "Would to heaven you were, Willoughby! Do," he added, anxiously, "let us go to town; you ought to take some medical advice; if, as you say, you do not sleep, you cannot be well."

"Well—I am perfectly well I assure you—shall we ride?" he added, rising and calling his two beautiful greyhounds that lay on the

which I ordered for the r
shall we go out at the ba
to it myself."

Willoughby hurried ou
and heard him inquire w
respecting the poison, and
rational manner, precautionar
mistakes or accidents in its
reply pointed out a shelf i
where it lay perfectly apart
food; and showed both the
outward paper was, accordi
very proper precaution on the
and apothecaries, strongly m

print, which made them more strikingly legible to every eye.

The brothers now proceeded to ride as Willoughby had proposed; Alfred, however, could think of nothing but the poison: he had often heard of the most artful preparations on the part of deranged persons, and he could not banish the idea that Willoughby had made the particular inquiries he had just heard with a view to possessing himself of the arsenic; and he determined, lest this should indeed be the case, that he would, as soon as he returned to the house, privately take away the packet from where he had seen it, and put it in some place of security. If the fearful project of self-destruction did indeed dwell among the wanderings of his brother's mind, the quiet

removal of the means would not only prevent the immediate execution of his fatal purpose, but might by possibility change the current of his thoughts into some more healthful channel. Accordingly, as soon after their return as he could find a convenient opportunity, he repaired to the said saddle-room, and not wishing to confide his fears to any one, possessed himself, unobserved as he supposed, of the paper of arsenic, which he locked up carefully in his own escritoire, feeling, as he did so, almost a security, that he had thus for the present, at least, removed one danger from the reach of his poor brother; for as Willoughby had been scarcely out of his sight, since they came back from their ride, there was no reason to fear that

the mischief was already done: nor did it indeed occur to Alfred, when he found the packet laying where he had seen it in the morning, that without displacing the whole, sufficient for the purpose he dreaded might have been taken away.

For the remainder of the day, and especially during dinner, he observed that Willoughby's manners were more than ever strange and inconsistent; and that his efforts at gaiety were fewer and worse sustained than on any former occasion; yet, as long as the servants were present, extravagant. While, the moment the brothers were alone, there was an overflow of mournful tenderness, and an expression of the same character in his countenance which filled Alfred with the most harrowing sensations.

Yet a circumstance had occurred when they were riding, which had in a great measure allayed his immediate fears, and given his thoughts too, a somewhat new direction. They had met with a neighbouring squire who, possessing little either of tact or delicacy, and also thinking himself privileged as being not only an old man but an old acquaintance, immediately began to rally Sir Willoughby on the report of his approaching marriage.

Willoughby saw that Alfred watched him anxiously; and, being rendered by the presence of a stranger doubly determined to keep his secret to the last, he aroused himself to great exertion and replied with astonishing coolness, at the same time admitting the fact of his intended marriage, that the event to which the squire

alluded was not to take place so immediately as he seemed to imagine, for that previously to his becoming a benedict he was to join his friends at Paris, and proceed with them on a tour which would occupy some months.

The old gentleman at parting commended him for showing Lady Anne Arndale so soon how little he thought of her, and congratulated him on the great superiority of his present choice, both in beauty and fortune. The gloom and abstraction of Willoughby after this was so marked that it suggested to Alfred the possibility of his not having yet conquered his first attachment, and of his having entered into his present engagement more out of pique than preference. How strange and absorbing for a time were the speculations occasioned by such

a surmise, while some of them were calculated almost to reawaken selfish regrets, yet were these again checked by the appalling thought that such a supposition strengthened his worst fears ; contending emotions were more likely seriously and permanently to unsettle the mind than the excitement, however great, of a successful attachment ; at least, to suppose such a cause, it was necessary to take for granted a predisposition stronger than there was, perhaps, sufficient grounds to believe did exist.

That disease however, was present, whatever the cause, there could be no doubt ; and Alfred firmly resolved, therefore, if he could not the very next day prevail with Willoughby to accompany him to town, that he would send thither for the first medical advice that could

be obtained, and also entreat his mother to come to Arden. For he now began to fear with infinite self-reproach that he had already carried delicacy on this point too far.

CHAPTER XIX.

A BISCUIT and a glass of wine-and-water was usually the temperate supper of the brothers. They generally took it in the library, and read till they felt disposed to retire for the night. This evening Alfred, who had risen from the table for a book which he happened to be some little time in selecting, observed on his return, but without a suspicion at the moment as to the cause, that the water which Willoughby was pouring

into his glass looked less clear than usual. He remarked upon the circumstance and advised his brother to put it away and have some fresh brought up.

"It seems very good," said Willoughby, adding wine and taking off the whole at one draught, though in general he sipped it from time to time during perhaps an hour of either reading or conversation.

Alfred accustomed to his brother's love of opposition in trifles was not at all surprised. He sighed, however, for he always considered this infirmity of temper a symptom of the incipient malady he dreaded; so simply saying,

"There is quite a sediment in the goblet you see," he read on, but still without an apprehension. It had somehow never once entered into his calculations, amid all his vague fears, that

a mode and occasion so public as the present would have been chosen.

“Put away your book, Alfred,” said Willoughby, a few moments after. Alfred looked up and saw that his brother was pale in the extreme, and with a ghastliness of expression quite alarming.

“I have the idea more strongly impressed upon my mind than ever this evening that I shall not live long!” said Willoughby in a voice changed and hoarse; “and that when I do die,” he continued, “it will be suddenly, very suddenly: let our good-night then be also a farewell; we know not what may happen before morning.”

“Do not make me miserable by such melancholy forebodings,” said Alfred, “surely—there is, there can be no cause for such!

Willoughby! Willoughby! you do look ill!" And the thought crossed his mind, that had he not secured the poison he should now be really alarmed.

" It is only a presentiment," said Willoughby, affecting a ghastly smile; " yet, lest it should be verified, indulge me in my childishness, and before I go to bed take leave of me, and—forgive, say you forgive every pettish word, every] wilful act, of which I have ever been guilty towards you, my kind, my excellent, my too amiable brother."]

: " Forgive! dear Willoughby! surely I have all that is kind and noble in intention to thank you for, nothing to forgive—unless indeed," and he paused in silent alarm. " Oh, Willoughby," he added, gazing at the working of his countenance, " I fear—I fear some terrible

purpose ! speak to me ! tell me I am wrong—you have no such thought—no you would not—you press my hand, what does that mean ? Speak, Willoughby ! Is it to reassure me ?—oh, my poor mother—think of her !—think of me, how much, how truly I love you, never should I know happiness again, if—oh misery—those eyes—he does not know me !” Willoughby attempted to speak ; the words were not only indistinctly uttered, but evidently without purpose in their arrangement ; while unable longer to maintain the struggle against bodily suffering, with the wildness of delirium in his looks and gestures, he sank on a sofa writhing in agonies which partook of the nature of convulsions.

The now terrified Alfred, calling aloud for help, hastily loosed his brother’s stock and

undid the buttons of his waistcoat ; within which, while so employed, his eye was unavoidably drawn from its close connexion with the frightful circumstances of the moment, by a piece of crushed paper, on which the word "*Poison*," in the conspicuous characters already described, was nevertheless strikingly visible. Alfred snatched up this fatal witness ; it was a part of what he had seen in the morning, and had but too evidently been thrust into the bosom as a place of concealment after its contents had been emptied into the goblet ; nay, it had still a considerable portion of the powder lurking in its folds. The terrible conviction that his precaution had been too late, and that his brother had assuredly swallowed the *poison*, flashed at once upon Alfred, fearfully strengthened by the appearance of Willoughby

laying on the sofa, his eyeballs rolling beneath their closed lids, except when they started wildly open for a second and closed again. He still attempted to speak, but now nearly without the power of articulation, saving that the name of Alfred was more than once distinguishable amid a low rapid murmur, which however soon faded into whispers, then subsided into a mere movement of the lips without sound, and then ceased altogether. By this time the poor sufferer had become quite insensible, and no one had yet answered Alfred's continued calls for help. He now ran to the bell, then to the door, giving orders to the servants, who at length appeared, to fly for the nearest medical aid, adding incoherent directions about bringing antidotes for *poison*, and even naming arsenic in particular; yet at the same moment, without

any direct consciousness of what he was doing, his fingers with a sort of instinctive movement were thrusting within the breast of his own waistcoat, the fatal scrap of paper he had found in his brother's bosom; for all the while that with the aid of servants he was vainly endeavouring to render assistance to Willoughby, confused notions were floating through his mind of the dreadful addition, that in case of the worst, it would be to his poor mother's grief to know that Willoughby had committed the awful crime of putting a period to his own existence; and mingled with these, were thoughts still more disjointed of Christian rites refused to persons guilty of suicide: so that altogether Alfred was actuated, without any power of defining his motives, by a vague sense, that some sort of necessity existed for suppressing

the proofs of his brother having wilfully taken the poison. He was of course quite incapable at such a moment of a process of reasoning by which to decide what other supposition it would be either probable or desirable should be formed.

Messengers had been despatched in every direction ; yet before any medical man arrived, the convulsions had subsided, and death, accompanied by the most ghastly appearances, taken place.

At length the bustle of an arrival was heard ; instead, however, of the expected doctor, Geoffery Arden entered the room.

CHAPTER XX.

THE arrival of Geoffery at this critical moment was accidental. He had scarcely time to gather from the appearance of Willoughby, and the incoherent expressions of Alfred, who seemed at one moment half wild, the next stupefied by his grief, a somewhat confused notion of what had occurred, when his entrance was followed by that of Doctor Harman.

The patient, however, being already quite dead, there remained nothing for the Doctor to do, but pronounce his opinion as to the

probable cause of death, founded on the appearance of the body, and the symptoms of the attack, as described by those who had been present. This he did by expressing a suspicion that Sir Willoughby had swallowed poison, although he granted that similar symptoms might have been occasioned by a fit of apoplexy, and that such a fit might have had a fatal termination. To all Alfred's anxious inquiries if there was nothing that could be done, he replied decidedly that all was over. Alfred now stood for a considerable time with his arms folded, looking on his brother with a sort of mute despair, when a strange unbidden vision of the appearance which the water in Willoughby's goblet had presented, occurred to his memory. He turned towards the table on which the glasses still remained, and in a

species of day-dream, lifted and examined that from which Willoughby had drunk. He perceived in the bottom a considerable quantity of whitish powder. Unfit for cool calculation, as were the powers of his mind at the moment, this, with all the circumstances, seemed to place it beyond a doubt, that Willoughby had taken the poison at the very time he had commented on the want of clearness of the water into which he was pouring his wine. With this conviction came again vague thoughts, as before, of expediency of concealing the fact of the suicide. Too wretched, however, to remember how strange his conduct, if not explained, must appear to those present, he poured some water into the glass, and was about to empty the same into a basin on the table.

“ Should not the contents of that glass be preserved ? ” said Geoffery, aside to the Doctor.

“ Undoubtedly ! ” replied the tatler, darting forward, and seizing the visibly trembling hand of Alfred.

“ This may be of consequence, my dear sir,” he said, mildly.

Alfred, as though he had been a detected culprit, who had not a word to plead in his own excuse, yielded without a comment, not only his whole attention, but his whole heart and soul, being at the instant recalled to the sofa, whence some of the servants were about to remove the remains of Willoughby, for the purpose of conveying them to a bedchamber. But for this circumstance, he would, in all probability, have explained his motives to the Doctor. Alfred now assisted the servants with

as much tender solicitude, as though the unconscious object of his care were still capable of distinguishing affection's gentle hand, from all the aid that may be bought or sold. The Doctor and Geoffery had also approached the sofa, on the impulse of the moment, ready to give their assistance had it been required; it was not required, however, and they stood to let the melancholy procession pass. While doing so, their eyes naturally rested on the interesting figure of Alfred, bending over his poor brother, and consequently it so happened that while he was in the act of stooping, accompanied with some share of exertion, in the performance of his pious task, they both distinctly saw the piece of paper he had so lately placed within the breast of his waistcoat, glide out from thence, and fall to the ground.

Geoffery perceived the Doctor's eye follow it; he kept his own upon it, for there was sufficient visible of the conspicuous letters with which it was marked, to draw attention. When all but the Doctor and himself had quitted the apartment, he pointed at it. The large characters, as we have already particularly remarked, being, though strongly done with a pen, those of print, were so distinct, that they were legible, even at the distance where the paper lay on the floor. After both gentlemen had stood looking down upon it for a considerable time, Geoffery said, at length,

“ Will you have the goodness, Doctor, to pick up that paper? ” The Doctor did so, though not without hesitation.

“ I would not have touched it myself for the world ! ” continued Geoffery, as soon as

it was in the Doctor's hand. " You saw whence it fell ? " he proceeded. The Doctor was gazing in horror, one after another, at the letters which spell the word poison, and carefully collecting together a minute particle or two of powder, which still remained in some yet unfolded crevices of the crumpled paper :

" I am sorry to say I did," he answered, shaking his head.

" What powder is that ? " asked Geoffery.

" It is scarcely fair to form a judgment on so small a portion," replied the Doctor, " but it certainly resembles arsenic."

Geoffery looked very hard at him; he returned the look, for a moment only, then dropped his eyelids, and compressed his lips, as though he feared his thoughts would assume

the shape of words, and escape from them unbidden.

“What can be the meaning of all this, Doctor!” said Geoffery, after a pause of some duration.

“I don’t know, sir—I don’t know,” replied the Doctor, hastily, and almost angrily.

“There seems to be no comment necessary,” observed Geoffery. “Yet,” he added, after another pause, “the only possible solution is too horrible to be thought of.”

“Quite so, sir, quite so!” replied the Doctor. “I wish,” he subjoined, shortly after, “that any other medical man but myself had been called in.”

“That, too, was strange!” said Geoffery, turning towards the table: “what object could

Mr. Arden, or Sir Alfred, rather, as we must now call him I suppose, have had in attempting to rinse that glass?"

"It is impossible to say," replied the Doctor.

"Why should he," persisted Geoffery, instead of being anxious to ascertain the truth (as every near relative who had not his own reasons for a contrary line of conduct must be), "seek to make away with evidence?"

The Doctor compressed his lips harder than before.

"What do you suppose these dregs to be?" asked Geoffery, after a long pause, devoted to a careful scrutiny of the contents of the glass.

"Arsenic, apparently," replied the Doctor;—this was a point on which he considered himself called upon to speak.

“ And you think Sir Willoughby’s death was caused by poison ? ”

“ I did certainly from the symptoms described suspect as much ; but I should, for the further satisfaction of the family, recommend the body being opened.”

“ You are quite right,” said Geoffery ; “ it ought to be satisfactory to every member of the family that the cause and manner of Sir Willoughby’s death should be clearly ascertained.”

The good Doctor moved his head mournfully but made no reply. The paper was still in his hand. Being about to depart, he offered it to Geoffery, saying, “ I had better give this to you, I suppose, sir ? ”

“ By no means,” replied Geoffery ; “ but I must request that you will take especial charge

of it. 'Tis scarcely to be supposed that circumstances so mysterious and extraordinary will be passed over without some investigation, in which case that scrap of paper will be of infinite importance.

The Doctor took out a memorandum-book with trembling fingers, placed the bit of paper within its leaves, and sighing as he restored the depository to his pocket, said, "Ours is a wretched profession, sir! It is not enough that we must witness every agony that is felt, and see every tear that is shed; but other and still more painful duties, which at first sight one would suppose to be quite distinct from the medical department, are daily thrust upon us by circumstances. The nakedness of human misery as well as human depravity both, are for ever before

our eyes !” after a pause he added, “ I wish it to be distinctly understood, that I shall decline all interference which is not enforced by law—which is not, in short, matter of sad necessity.”

“ We must be in a great measure guided by circumstances,” said Geoffery, “ My situation is peculiarly painful and delicate; I heartily wish I had not arrived when I did—had my own suspicions never been awakened, I had not been called upon either by honour or by feeling, to take a part which may, notwithstanding, be supposed by many to be very invidious. You don’t think I could with propriety allow this affair to blow over without an investigation ? What do you say, Doctor ?”

“ I can offer no advice on such a subject,” replied the Doctor, “ it would be quite stepping out of my sphere, sir.”

"I commend your prudence," observed Geoffery, "It is time enough for you to answer questions when you are on your oath."

"A surmise at least," interrupted the Doctor, with the air of one who had suddenly recollect ed an important fact, if not an absolute knowledge that poison had been taken, must have existed previously to my being sent for, as the servant who came for me, desired that I should bring antidotes; and, by-the-by, arsenic was particularly mentioned. Possibly Sir Wil loughby is known to have put a period to his own existence?"

"Wherefore, in that case," replied Geoffery, "should the paper which had contained the poison have been so carefully concealed, where both of us saw it come from? Besides, Sir

Willoughby's affairs were in the most prosperous state possible. He was also on the point of marriage with a very charming young woman. A match quite of his own choosing, too."

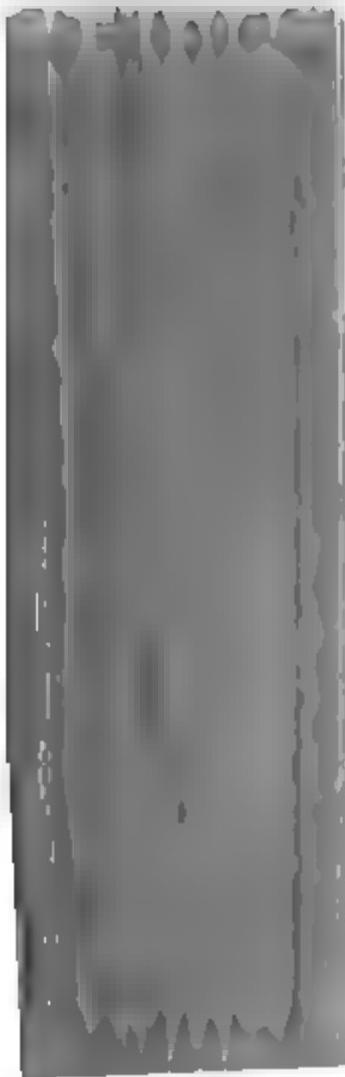
After a slight degree of hesitation, Geoffery assuming a look of affected mystery, through which, however, flashed that fiendish sparkle of the eye, which betrays the self-gratulatory acumen of knavery, added,

" I should scarcely suppose that there had existed much cordiality between the brothers of late. Both were pretenders to the hand of the same lady, and the feeling of mutual jealousy on the subject was, I myself happen to know, very strong. The lady in question, too, is an heiress of considerable wealth, by

whose means there is little doubt that Alfred Arden had, before poor Sir Willoughby became his *rival*, hoped to mend his fortunes as a younger brother. Indeed, I think he was very ill treated in the business from first to last. It was enough to exasperate the feelings of any man;—not that I mean to justify a crime like this."

"These are family matters with which I can have no concern," interrupted the prudent man of medicine. "As it is highly probable, however, that some investigation of the sudden death of Sir Willoughby must take place, it becomes, I apprehend, my imperative duty, being the medical attendant on the occasion, to take charge of the contents of this glass."

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CHAPTER XXI.

As soon as Doctor Harman had taken his departure, Geoffery, with an officious affection of sympathy, followed Alfred up stairs.

He found him seated beside the bed on which the deceased was laid, and leaning against it, with his face buried in both his hands.

The attendants had all quitted the apartment; Geoffery attempted some commonplace expressions of condolence. Alfred moved his

head in a desponding manner, but did not raise it.

Geoffery while standing waiting, as it were,—for he deemed it necessary to remain a few moments with his cousin,—cast his eyes, from mere unfeeling idleness, round the apartment, when something on an adjacent table arrested his attention. He looked down upon it for a few seconds, then raised his eyes cautiously in the direction of Alfred, and perceiving that his face was still covered, lifted the object of his curiosity, which appeared to be a letter, slid it into his pocket, and after repeating his expressions of condolence and adding some sage advice respecting firmness under the unavoidable trials of life, and the expediency of courting the salutary influence of sleep, was about to retire; but

Alfred, while he was bidding him good night, looked up for a moment, and said,

“ I would not on any account have it known that poor Willoughby had been guilty of suicide. They may deny him Christian burial ; —besides it would add greatly to my poor mother’s affliction. Did not the doctor say something of a sudden seizure, a fit, having similar symptoms, and of its being likely to prove equally fatal ? ”

“ He did.”

“ Let it be so supposed then, and discourage all further inquiry. Good night—” and here he again covered his face ; on which Geoffery sought his own room, and having carefully shut and bolted his door, drew the purloined letter from his pocket, and without waiting to

ing to see the packet," he pursued, "was so fortunate——He had not noticed it, I should think——that, however, is a point which I must ascertain, for he appears to be by some means, aware of the suicide——but can he prove it, if necessary?——at present he seems desirous to conceal the fact, which is so far well, the mystery will look suspicious."—Here he again opened the enclosure, shook his head, looked serious, and paced the room once or twice—"Their being abroad, however, just at this time, has happened well," he said—stopped and stood still—then added, after a long pause of deep and motionless thought, "This is most probably the only proof—It would certainly appear from its style that he had made no previous

letter has been seen by :



CHAPTER XXII.

THE slumbers which followed the prolonged reveries of Geoffery Arden, were rendered unrefreshing by feverish dreams, some of a truly horrible character; in particular the vision that presented itself on his first closing his eyes; which was, that he had himself for some reason or other been condemned to be hung; that it was the night before his execution, and that he was laying trembling in the condemned cell, dreading the approach of dawn. The agony of his feelings awoke

dream, had for some mon
even on his heart, which
was justly entitled to th
“desperately wicked;”
scheme with which he l
his pillow, seemed almo
be attempted; he almos
idea of inflicting on any
intense suffering with the
which his own heart still b

These were the thought
of darkness. He slept ag
to fear, as he beheld the
penetrating every where, &
forms of all things evident,

ticable. No one would listen to such a proposition : and as for proofs, could circumstances be indeed tortured into any strong enough to meet the powerful current of opinion, flowing in the opposite direction ? Yet, on the other hand, such things had been heard of, and without one-tenth part the stake as to property, which in this instance might be alleged as one powerful incentive, while there was room also to suppose the workings of violent jealousy, and even of revenge. His own mother, moreover, could be summoned to prove that he had actually been accepted, and that he himself ascribed his disappointment afterwards to the rivalship of his brother.

At this moment a servant answered Geoffery's bell, prepared to assist him at his morning toilet.

The man's face was full of importance and

&c., said,

"Why, Davison, you lo-
ened! What is the matter?"

"I don't know that I had
to look frightened," said the
ever way the poor gentleman
whether by a fit, as some
as others *thinks*, it was ne-
before ever we came to the
no saying, for that matter, who
who wont; they are all in a
it below, as never was."

"How do you mean?"

"Why the coachman th-
he that went to Arden for t-

for the rats, for it was in the stable-lofts they were most troublesome, that he'll get brought into some mischief, although he had his master's orders ; but who is to prove that, now poor Sir Willoughby's dead and gone ? And for the butler, he's afraid of his life, but people may think that something must have been wrong with the glasses or the water, when he carried them in ; and so he took Johnson and myself to the saddle-room, that we should see where the arsenic lay, and so judge that it was impossible for it to come near any thing that was for eating or drinking. When we got there, however, the packet with the poison was nowhere to be found, although it had lain on the very shelf he showed us, in that selfsame room (the butler *sais*), no longer ago than yesterday forenoon, when poor Sir

inquiry been made? having moved the pac light on the whole affair that gentlemen are to manner by the shamef vants. How are they either? How are they tentional? The half c I make no doubt, and

"The servants are a not one of them touched near the place," replied more, the groom who round, after the gentlemens, that he saw Mr. Al

saddle-room with a paper parcel in his hand; so that if one of the family thought proper to remove the arsenic himself, and an accident happened in consequence to any article of food, the servants all say that was no fault of theirs."

"Can the man swear to this?"

"So he says."

"If this could be proved it might certainly clear servants from blame, but it is, I must say, altogether a very improbable story. If Sir Alfred had wished to have the arsenic removed to any other place, he would have given orders to that effect, and not have gone about the thing himself in the clandestine manner you describe. No, no, this won't do, it is but a flimsy excuse, and as I told

their nonsensical excuse
the thing hushed up.
he is too much overcome
to any thing ; it necessa
therefore to make the
Johnson here, I must qu
fact, examine them all,
face to face."

Geoffery was determine
on this pretext, to colle
he could as to what
others, and what the fact
admitted of proof or of
enough to be perfectly awa
were not in fault, but he c

judicious play, to pretend to blame them ; exciting their ignorant and selfish fears, might be useful, and at length make them willing to hear even their master accused rather than themselves. Although he had sources of information not open to others, he could by no means understand the extraordinary circumstance of the paper which had fallen from Alfred's bosom. The attempt to rinse the glass, he now indeed thought might be ascribed to the wish Alfred had since expressed to conceal the fact of the suicide ; but as he had not explained his motive to the doctor at the time, the circumstance looked so very suspicious, that he hoped it might be turned to account. He could of course deny what his cousin had said to him in private. Knowing however, as he did,

cious. He would, therefore, make himself the medium of communication between Alfred and all others ; and, if possible, encourage him not to see any one else. In the end, if necessary, he could and would firmly and boldly deny every word which had been said to him only, and so give to his cousin's motives the colouring of excuses, subsequently invented to cover guilt. This, however, was a desperate game, which he would not venture to play till he could see that his card would sweep the board.

The circumstance of Alfred's having been seen bringing away the packet of poison, would certainly be very strong if it should so turn out that it could be proved ; he feared, however, that it must be a mistake : he had his

CHAPTER XXIII.

“ PRAY, Johnson,” said Geoffery, when the person so named made his appearance, “ what is all this that Davison has been saying, about a paper of arsenic being missing from where it lay no later than yesterday ; and the groom’s absurd assertion, that Sir Alfred was the person who removed it ? This is a mere excuse, to hide the carelessness of some of you servants, who have probably flung the paper of poison in among the glasses ; and now that you see the consequences of your own misconduct, you are all terrified.

And very justly, for I make no doubt of it, the half of you will be hung!—The plea of carelessness, let me tell you, and I know something of the law, will not be taken; malicious interest will be supposed. As I told Davison, if Sir Alfred chose to have the arsenic removed, he would have given his orders to that effect, and not have gone about the thing himself, in a skulking clandestine manner: why should he take so much trouble, unless concealment were his object; and what motive could he have for concealment?"

"The lad *sais* it was Sir Alfred," answered Johnson.

"Can he swear to the fact?"

"He *sais* he can."

"Poor Sir Alfred," proceeded Geoffery, "is not in a state of mind to be spoken to; or the thing might be cleared up in a moment, by my

asking him the question. Indeed he has given orders that no one shall go near him ; besides, it would be the utmost cruelty to allude to such a subject at present ; particularly if he really has, by any carelessness about this paper of which you speak, been the cause of the accident, he will never forgive himself ;—so that, in that case, from respect to his feelings, the circumstance ought in fact to be hushed up.” Geoffery was well aware that ordering servants to hush a thing up, was the best possible mode of giving it publicity.

The groom, when he appeared, was so firm to his text, that Geoffery began to hope the assertion, whether true or false, might be turned to account. He endeavoured, accordingly, to terrify the lad into a steady evidence, by telling him, that what he once said, he must, on his

peril, stand to throughout ; for that the slightest prevarication, or even hesitation on so serious an affair, might hang him. "And I know something of the law," he added, as usual. So saying, he dismissed the groom, desiring him to send up the butler.

"This is a shocking business, Thomas," said Geoffery, as the butler entered.

Thomas made no reply.

"Poor Sir Alfred," continued Geoffery, "thinks, it seems, that his brother died of a fit, and it is better for his peace of mind, that he should think so ; although there is no doubt, that Sir Wiloughby was poisoned. Do you think, Thomas, that you will be able to clear yourself ?"

"Clear myself!" answered the man, his eyes flashing with rage, through the honest tears he had been shedding for his master.

"I'd be glad to know who'll accuse—I who have served his father, and his grandfather before him, man and boy these fifty-five years, and have nursed himself and his brother one on each knee, many's the time."

"Far be it from me, Thomas, to accuse you or any one else of such a crime as murder; I only suspect you of unpardonable carelessness; but I must say, and I know something of the law, as you may suppose, that circumstances are very strong against you; it may be thought that you intended to poison both brothers, and rob the house; my arrival was unexpected; such things you know have been done! Nothing I should think can clear you, but its being satisfactorily proved who is to blame. You brought up the glasses; poison has been found in one of them, and there was no one in the

room but Sir Willoughby, his brother, and yourself. You certainly would get nothing by the death of Sir Willoughby, unless, as I said before, you had made away with both gentlemen, and robbed the house; that is so far in your favour: yet no one, you know, could think of suspecting his own brother, and circumstances seem to lay the mischief, however it happened, at the door of one or the other."

"No one who had not got the heart of the devil in his breast would lay it at the door of either," replied the man, angrily.

Without noticing his irritation, Geoffery proceeded, "I still mean in the way of accident or mistake. Some of you talk, I understand, of Sir Alfred having been the person who removed the paper of arsenic." And here he enlarged as before, on the affliction our hero would no

doubt suffer, could he at all blame himself for any thing that had happened, and how cruel it would therefore be to mention the subject to him.

"Was the arsenic at any time kept in the same place with the glasses? Do you think you might have scattered any quantity about, in lifting it from shelf to shelf?"

"I wiped out the glasses with my own hands, the moment before I carried them in. Besides, the arsenic was never in the cupboard with my things at all, it lay on a shelf in the saddle-room, quite out of the way of what was for any one's use, and was marked in large letters, "arsenic, poison;" for Sir Willoughby was very particular in his orders to me to be careful about it, and made me show him where I put it, and that Mr. Alfred knows, for he was with

his brother at the same time, no longer since than yesterday forenoon."

"If your statement is correct, I do not see how it was possible for an accident to have happened," said Geoffery, "could you swear that it was not possible for an accident to have occurred?"

"Yes, I could," he replied, though sulkily. "That is," he added, "as long as the arsenic lay where I left it."

This was one of the main points which Geoffery wanted to establish. He now dismissed the butler, who was sobbing so violently, that he could scarcely answer the questions put to him.

The coachman next entered; and it being Geoffery's object, with the views already stated, to alarm all the servants for their own safety, he

looked extremely austere, and, aware that the individual he had now to deal with was not overburdened with wisdom, began thus :

" So I find, James, you don't pretend to deny that you brought arsenic from Arden, and the defence which I understand you pretend to set up, is, that you did so by your master's orders, for the purpose of poisoning rats. Now, this is quite too hackneyed an excuse; as to the orders you *say* you received, I fancy you have no proof that you received any."

" I told the groom that went with me, and the boy at the apothecary's, that my master sent me."

" You told them! What sort of proof is that? You don't suppose that your own word will be taken for yourself, whatever it may

will certainly be hung
only thing in your favo-
get nothing by Sir Will-

“If they chooses to i-
replied James, very pi-
help it, I dun no I was i-

“It’s a very awkward
in your favour but a des-
it was not Sir Alfred wi-
for if so, he is there,
which might save you.”

“No, it was Sir Wilk-
After a little more c-
retired to the ~~anxious~~

intended it should be: the utmost excitement existed. The one general argument in their own favour, cunningly suggested to each by Geoffery, that they would get nothing by the death of poor Sir Willoughby, was constantly recurred to, while every time this was said, the remembrance naturally suggested itself of who it was that would gain every thing by the melancholy event; not that any of the household yet dared in word, or even perhaps in thought, to connect accusation or suspicion with the mental recognition of the abstract fact. The strangeness, too, of attempting to rinse the glass, and the strangeness of taking away the paper of arsenic were named, while other still stranger circumstances were from time to time, as they transpired, cautiously whispered to a chosen few, by Geoffery's man,

Davison, but no one ventured to draw inferences. As the servants, however, of neighbouring families came in to make inquiries respecting the sudden demise of Sir Willoughby, already beginning to be generally known, many very extraordinary rumours soon got abroad.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ALFRED, wholly unsuspicuous of the evil thoughts which dwelt in the minds of others, was seated in the retirement of his own chamber, writing the melancholy announcement of Willoughby's death to Lady Arden. With the idea, however, that the knowledge of his brother's having put a period to his own existence would add much to his mother's affliction, he made no allusion to that part of the subject; nor any mention of the supposition, that Willoughby's death had been occasioned by poison; he merely stated,

that it had been very sudden, and that Dr. Harman was of opinion, that something of an apoplectic fit, had been the cause.

While he was thus employed, Geoffery presented himself, and renewed his officious offers of condolence.

Alfred thanked him, but begged to be left alone. While Geoffery stood behind his cousin's chair, his restless eye (expressive at once of outlook and precaution), wandering as usual in every direction, and scanning every object, despaired, as much to his astonishment as delight, in one of the recesses of the escritoire, the paper packet marked arsenic, which it may be remembered, Alfred had put there the day before. How it had got there, which to Geoffery was of course a mystery, there could be little doubt that this was the packet spoken of by the

servants as missing. Here indeed was a powerful circumstance in favour of a scheme, so diabolical in purpose, so improbable in execution, that it was his wishes, not his hopes, which had first given entertainment to the thought. This monster, this creation of the evil one, was now assuming an almost palpable, or at least plausible form. If, as he had strong reason to suspect, the entire truth was known only to himself, it seemed now, no great stretch of probability to hope, that this extraordinary combination of unlooked-for circumstances might establish, by apparently irresistible evidence, the next to incredible accusation, which, could it indeed be established, would in the selfsame hour build up at once his own long despaired-of fortunes. Caution, however, must still be observed, while

steps must be taken, to procure the interference of the coroner ; and get him to require that the body should be opened ; he must also receive a hint to search the escritoire ; and the result of the coroner's inquest must decide him, whether or not it would be prudent to take any further steps. In the mean while, however, lest the poison should be removed, previously to the time of a legal search being made, he must contrive, that the packet, where it now lay, should be seen by an impartial witness. His own evidence might not be received, as he was known of course, as heir at law, to have an interest in Alfred's being proved guilty. These were his thoughts, while descending to the hall. Here he summoned Davison, and instructed him to go up to Sir Alfred's room ; to enter quietly, as

though fearful of disturbing him ; to proceed to the back of his chair before he spoke ; then to apologize for his intrusion by saying, Mr. Geoffery had sent him for his gloves, which he had laid on the table and forgotten. While pretending to search for the gloves, he was to fix an attentive eye on the part of the escritoire described to him by Geoffery, till he saw with sufficient distinctness to be able to swear to the fact, a paper packet with the word arsenic marked upon it. He was of course not to make a comment, or even allow Sir Alfred to observe the direction of his eyes.

This service punctually performed, but the gloves, which, by-the-by, were on Geoffery's hands, still unfound, Davison returned to

his master, who, after ascertaining that he could swear to having seen the arsenic, added,

“ You must have perceived, Davison, by the delicacy of my conduct from the first, how glad I should be to retain the charitable opinions of every one as long as possible; but at the same time I have a duty to perform, though a painful one, and so may you, perhaps, when called upon in a court of justice. In the mean time, however, be prudent, and don’t hurt the feelings of the older servants, by any rash or premature remarks. As for strangers they don’t care, and every one must know sooner or later, so that your denying facts to them would be wrong, and might invalidate your future evidence.”

Davison looked half puzzled and half frightened, but said nothing.

"Doctor Harman," proceeded Geoffery, "has not been quite prudent; he has, I find from one or two neighbours who have called this morning to make inquiries, been gossiping already." And here, under pretext of repeating what the Doctor had been saying, though poor Harman, to do him justice, had not opened his lips, Geoffery, in an under voice, and with much mystery of manner, mentioned the suspicious circumstance of the paper which had fallen from Sir Alfred's bosom. As for the attempt to rinse the glass, several servants had been present at the time.

Geoffery, now thinking that he had supplied his attendant with sufficient topics of

conversation for any servants' hall he might enter, ordered his horses. He had several objects in view in his morning ride, one of the principal ones, a call on business at Doctor Harman's.

CHAPTER XXV.

WITH what indescribable feelings of exultation did Geoffery ride through the splendid park, look back on the baronial remains of the ancient castle, and the grandeur of the modern mansion, then around them on the immeasurable extent of the grounds, the endless variety of the scenery, the magnificent, unfathomable woods, the beautiful openings, displaying in the distance the rich low pastures, with their grazing flocks; the bare hill rising beyond, crowned with herds of deer; bends of the picturesque

river, with here the swan or the wild duck sailing on its smooth bosom, there a waterfall, veiling its rocky sides in spray, and clothing its surface with a sheet of foam; all, in short, on which he had so long looked with corroding envy, and fierce thirst for possession, but for many years without a hope.

He checked the bridle of his horse on the centre of a little eminence, inhaled a long draught of the fragrant air, and smiled with supercilious self-importance while he thought of the cheering probability, to which time and chance had at length given birth, that all might yet be his.

He found Doctor Harman at home, and with great solemnity and well-acted sorrow, made known to him the discoveries of the morning. The packet of arsenic being missing, Sir Alfred

having been seen coming from the place where it had lain, and the still more extraordinary and, he feared, perfectly decisive circumstance of his having himself seen a packet marked arsenic in Sir Alfred's escritoire.

It was too shocking to be thought of, he said, yet how were such staggering facts as these, together with those which had previously come under the Doctor's own eye, to be got rid of? He wished to retain charitable opinions to the very last. Investigation, however, had become a duty, although he would certainly wish it to be conducted in the most delicate manner possible. In answer to an inquiry from Geoffery, the Doctor said he had already tested the dregs found in the glass, and proved them to be arsenic; to obtain full satisfaction, he added, that it would be very desirable to

open the body, and examine by similar tests the contents of the stomach. "But," he proceeded "the request must come from Sir Alfred."

"Which we know will not be the case," replied Geoffery; "on the contrary, I fear he will refuse to permit an examination, and if so, the proper authorities must enforce submission; but I am so anxious to proceed in this affair with the utmost delicacy, that you would greatly oblige me, Doctor, if you would first urge it as your own request—as a matter of favour to yourself—as throwing a light on science. I do not wish unnecessarily to hurt the feelings of Sir Alfred, and if ever I am myself compelled to yield my belief to the frightful suspicions which circumstances, I am sorry to say, almost justify, it must not be

till the most ample proof has no longer left me free to doubt."

His object in wishing to act with this affected delicacy was, that Alfred might refuse to allow the body to be opened; as such conduct, under the circumstances, would look suspicious, and he felt certain, knowing as he did Alfred's wish to repress the suicide, that so requested he would of course refuse, while, if he were informed that suspicions already existed, it was to be supposed that he would for his own sake instantly consent. The Doctor, however, still objected to attend unsummoned.

As soon, therefore, as Geoffery returned to Arden, he despatched a servant on horseback with a verbal message, requesting that Doctor Harman and two surgeons would attend prepared to open the body of Sir Willoughby.

This succeeded in taking in the honest-hearted Doctor, to whom it did not occur to inquire who had given the message to a servant who was one of Sir Alfred's household.

On the arrival of the medical gentlemen, Geoffery, who was determined that every point unfavourable to his cousin should admit of proof by other witnesses than himself, sent a servant up to Sir Alfred with a message purporting to be from Doctor Harman to say, that if Sir Alfred had no objection, the Doctor was very desirous of being permitted to open the body of the deceased, for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not his view of the case were correct, in supposing that the sudden death of Sir Willoughby had been occasioned by a fit of apoplexy.

Alfred, surprised at the officious imperti-

nence of such an interference to which he had no idea of sacrificing the solemn injunctions of his dying brother, sent back an immediate and positive refusal ; on which Geoffery with a face of solemn sorrow, dismissed the medical gentlemen, adding many flourishes and innuendoes, and confessing that he certainly had ventured to send for them himself, in the hope that Sir Alfred might have been induced to permit an examination, for which the circumstances of the case so loudly called. This might be thought officious in him, but his motive was, to combine delicacy with a step he felt it his duty to take.

Alfred had many reasons for his refusal ; first, and above all, were his brother's anxious and repeated injunctions, which, except superseded by sad necessity, would of course be laws to

him ; next, he was, as we have already said, very desirous that the idea of a suicide should not be even suggested ; lest it should come to the ears of his mother, and add to her distress : and, finally, he wished, that if the idea were suggested, the fact should not be proved, lest as we have already hinted, Christian rites should be refused. At the same time, feeling himself but too certain, that his poor brother must have put a period to his own existence, he had no anxious doubts to be satisfied by an examination. As to the opinions which might be entertained by others, though the doctor had said at first, that the symptoms resembled those of poison, he had, at the same time allowed, that an apoplectic fit might have caused the sudden death, and been attended with similar symptoms. Alfred naturally thought, therefore, that the family appear-

ing satisfied with this solution, it would become the prevalent opinion, and the melancholy event pass over, as little noticed by the public, as the private sorrows of individuals generally are.

This honourable and exalted mind never once conceived the idea, that any combination of circumstances whatever, could have suggested to any human being such a thought of horror, as that of his having shortened the life of his dear brother; much less did he imagine, that by the part he was now acting, he was actually furnishing a treacherous enemy with a sort of presumptive evidence that such was the fact: so that while every unfortunate coincidence, on which the ignorance of some, and the malignant designs of others, could found an evil report, was being universally disseminated, and dis-

cussed. Alfred sat apart, unsuspicuous of evil, yielding to his grief, and communicating with none, except to give such orders as were absolutely necessary; while the arts of Geoffery, and the delicacy of friends, prevented any creature's offering him a hint of what was unhappily, by this time, passing in the minds of many. For, not only were all the particulars which the servants had witnessed, already in circulation; but, the circumstances of the marked paper falling from Alfred's bosom, and the missing packet being seen in his escritoire, were also beginning to be pretty generally known, to the great surprise of the poor Doctor, who, as we said, had never breathed a hint on the subject. Yet had his prudence gained him no credit; for Geoffery had not confined his insinuations against the Doctor's talents for taciturnity, to what he had

said to his man Davison ; but had also complained to several confidential friends, how that meddling, gossiping fellow, Harman, had been saying so and so—giving here each particular, in the form of a quotation. If his auditors *chanced* to reply, that they had heard nothing of the kind before, Geoffery would express his surprise ; assure them that every one else had ; lament that such should be the case ; and add, how much he had wished to suppress unpleasant reports ; at least, until the whole affair should necessarily become matter of public discussion.

Geoffery having, as we have said, his reasons for being aware that Willoughby had taken poison, was determined, for the furtherance of his diabolical schemes against Alfred, that the body should be opened ; and proof thus furnished, of the fact of poison having been swal-

lowed. He took care, therefore, that not only reports, but direct information should reach the coroner, of a nature to render it his duty to demand an investigation of the whole affair.

END OF VOL. II.

DILEMMAS OF PRIDE.

VOL. III.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.

DILEMMAS OF PRIDE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF FIRST LOVE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

V O L. III.

LONDON:

BULL AND CHURTON, HOLLES STREET.

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calling, was without exception, the most thorough-paced villain unhanged ; nay, many have been hanged who were not half as bad ; for this man was not only without remorse of conscience, but also without remorse of heart. His only reason for committing more robberies than murders was, that the former crime was in general more profitable than the latter ; but as to who died the lingering death of a broken heart, he cared not, so long as he gained a few pounds by the transaction.

He was known for a mean contemptible fellow, and consequently possessed but little of the confidence of the higher orders, so that when he could catch a gentleman to plunder, it was a sort of prize in the lottery to him ; but

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ture as a horse's mane ; her eyes were large, dark and bold ; her features regular—lips full—teeth large but good—and skin, though coarse, of a snowy white.

“ Ha, Fips, how are ye ?” said Geoffery entering. He next made his salutations to the lady, with a marked effort of gallantry in his manner.—“ So you have been making merry alone, I see, old fellow,” he added, turning again to Fips ; “ and I am just come in time for the empty bottle.”

“ Never mind, we'll have it changed for a full one. Come, sit ye down. Deb. go send us in a bottle of claret. Strange news afloat, Mr. Arden !” he added, as Deborah disappeared.

“ Stranger perhaps than you imagine, Fips,”

replied Geoffery with well affected solemnity, "Indeed, the only conclusion at which it is possible to arrive, after an impartial review of the circumstances," he pursued, lowering his voice, "is too horrible to be thought of. For myself, I am as you will allow very painfully situated. If a '*most foul and unnatural murder*' has been committed, it would be dastardly and contemptible in me, the nearest in blood, to suffer the murderer to escape, merely from a want of activity and decision in seeking out and bringing together sufficient evidence. Yet on the other hand, should my cousin, as I *sincerely* hope he may, prove innocent, it might appear invidious in me, the next heir, to have evinced what, though but a respect for

justice, might be misconstrued into a too great willingness to find him guilty." Here the entrance of the claret and the consequent discussion of its merits for a time interrupted the conversation.

"The object of my visit," said Geoffery, when the wine had been pronounced excellent, "is to crave once more that which I have so often before found useful—your friendly advice and assistance. What in fact I at present stand most in need of, is a friend whose disinterested exertions should ensure the ends of justice being answered, without my appearing to take an active part in this truly shocking affair."

"Humph," said Fips, who by all this as

perfectly understood as though it had been said in as many words, that the secret service required of him, and for which, if successful, he should no doubt be munificently rewarded, was to hang Sir Alfred Arden, whether innocent or guilty ; and by so doing, give Geoffery, who was the inevitable heir, by a strict male entail, possession of the title and estates.

Geoffery proceeded to give Fips an account of the circumstances connected with the melancholy event, in a manner ingeniously calculated to exhibit those features of the case most susceptible of exaggeration or misrepresentation ; he also recapitulated his own examination of the several servants, thus giving Fips an opportunity of judging what wit-

nesses might, if necessary, be found most available.

"For that matter," he added, "if you could find an opportunity yourself of conversing with these people, it might be desirable; you would understand the subject more fully."

Something was next said of the impropriety of suffering the public mind, and, through so all-pervading a medium, future judges and juries to be *prejudiced* by the *general high* character and seeming amiability of Sir Alfred, for such qualities were no palliation of the crime, if indeed, as he feared there could be no doubt, it had been committed.

There was another point of infinite importance, which was, that the business should

not be allowed to pass over without any investigation, as might be the case, if, for one reason or other, every one thought it necessary to be supine. He would himself be glad, if possible, to avoid taking an active part, yet something must be done; he should never forgive himself if the time for investigation were allowed to pass by, and the waves of oblivion to close over so shocking a transaction. While, on the other hand, if Sir Alfred were perfectly innocent, which, notwithstanding appearances, he should still be too happy to find the case, it would be the most cruel injustice to him, not to wipe out this foul stain from his reputation by a full and fair inquiry. He would have little reason to thank the friends, who,

from false delicacy, had suffered the proper occasion for so doing to pass over. At the same time it was very desirable that the necessary steps should be taken with the greatest possible delicacy; no one should appear to entertain a suspicion until the force of evidence should compel conviction.

"This is the line of conduct," continued Geoffery, "which I mean to observe with Sir Alfred, who, I know, has himself at present no apprehension that any suspicions are afloat. He gives out, it seems, and expects the public to believe, that his brother died of a fit of apoplexy.. The Doctor, it is true, did allow that the symptoms were such as might have attended a sudden seizure of the kind."

To keep his unsuspecting kinsman as long as possible in the dark by this pretended delicacy, was, as we have said, a part of Geoffery's hellish plot. He had contrived, under the mask of sympathy, to put a few important questions to Alfred, and the answers to these had been such, as very materially to increase his hopes of ultimate success. But he knew that if Alfred were informed that such a surmise, as that of his having wilfully murdered his poor brother, had found a place in the mind of any being upon earth, he would of course immediately come forward, and court the fullest investigation. And though it did not follow that even this must clear him, his avoiding inquiry, as Geoffery knew he would

continue to do, while under his present impression, would furnish, when connected with the circumstances that must come out in evidence, a strong presumption of guilt.

“Humph! humph!” uttered from time to time with the intonation of a fat pig wallowing in mud, had been the cautious comment of the sagacious Mr. Fips, during this lengthened tirade, except indeed that an involuntary exclamation of “No! That’s good!” had broken from him on the mention of the piece of paper marked “Poison” having fallen from within the breast of Sir Alfred’s waistcoat, and again, “That’s better still,” accompanied by a resounding stroke of his clenched hand on the table, when Geoffery came to his having

himself seen the missing packet of ~~anomia~~, in Sir Alfred's escritoire.

"I am always happy to oblige you, Mr. Anden," at length commenced Mr. Fips; "but after all, this is a kind of thing which cannot be said to be much in the way of my business; without, indeed, it could be contrived that I was to be attorney for the prosecution; for that there will be a prosecution there can be no doubt from what you tell me. I had heard all before, certainly in the way of report, but I had no idea it could be at all true;—I had no notion you had so good a case."

Geoffery undertook to arrange that Fips should be the attorney employed. "You have often, Fips," he continued, "conducted business

for me in the most liberal and friendly manner, when it was not in my power to remunerate your services as they merited ; should I however have the misfortune—for misfortune I must call it, taking all the circumstances into consideration—to succeed to the Arden estates on the *present* occasion, to repay amply all your past *disinterested* friendship shall be my first care. You shall not only have the agency, which is no trifle, but a handsome annuity beside ; and that not only for your own life, but also secured to your daughter ; unless indeed, means can be devised,” he added, smiling, “of identifying her interest with those of the owner of the estates themselves. I have hitherto been deterred,” he added with

an affectation of great candour, "from mentioning this subject by my poverty, and consequent inability to marry; but my admiration of Miss Fips, I think you must have seen."

Fips was of course profuse in his thanks for the intended honour; not that he felt unbounded confidence in the sincerity of the *soi-disant* lover, of whose pride and ambition he was perfectly aware: he did not however despair, considering the present aspect of affairs of having his client in a short time so completely in his power, as to be able to enforce the fulfilment of any hopes which the latter might at present think it good policy to hold out. And having now a sufficient "spur" of self-interest "to prick the sides of his intent," he entered into

the business in good earnest, took down notes of hints to be followed up, reports to be circulated, persons to be called upon, and especially an embassy of a most delicate nature to the coroner.

That functionary was to be requested on the part of Mr. Geoffery Arden, to make use of the information which he felt it his imperative duty to couvey to him, without noticing Mr. Arden's interference, in consideration of the very painful situation in which the latter found himself placed ; and in short, come forward in his official capacity as feeling himself called upon so to do, by the nature of the reports which had gone abroad. After this preamble, Mr. Fips was to inform the coroner at length

of every suspicious circumstance ; to indicate to him where the missing paper of arsenic was to be found ; and to request that he would require the attendance of the medical gentlemen, and enforce the opening of the body, which had hitherto been resisted. All this was followed up with hypocritical declarations, that as nothing short of the most positive proofs could induce Mr. Geoffery Arden to believe his cousin guilty, he could not, though feeling investigation a duty, endure the idea of standing forward his accuser, while there remained a possibility of his being proved innocent.

Each time Fips had occasion to speak, whether in question or reply, while thus receiving his instructions, he would commit some seem-

ing inadvertency of expression, almost removing the flimsy veil from the nature of the services required of him; and whenever he did this, he would look full in Geoffery's face. But that wary tactician as often dropped his eyelids, and replied, with hypocritical calmness, in the same key of caution in which he had commenced.

At length Fips pronounced it time for him to go out; and by the third effort, succeeding in disengaging himself from his arm-chair; then, with some difficulty bringing together the lower buttons and button-holes of his waistcoat, which, while in a sitting position, gaped full half a yard asunder, he departed, telling Geoffery, he might if he pleased, now that he had

talked business with him over a glass of wine,
take the opportunity of the hour or two he
should be absent, to talk love to his daughter,
over a cup of tea.

CHAPTER II.

As Colonel Trump says, “There is nothing forbidding to any man, about a fine woman.” Geoffery, therefore, now that he had placed more serious concerns in such excellent hands, had no objection to the recreation of a *tête-à-tête* on the footing of a received lover, with a young woman, whose personal attractions were above mediocrity, and whose modesty was not likely to be troublesome; while from her inferiority of station, her ideas of the high honour

conferred on her by the gentleman's addresses were calculated to smooth the way to advances, which an equal might have thought impertinent, or at least premature.

'When, therefore, Mr. Fips returned, after an absence of full two hours, he found the candle-wicks ominously long, and neither the tea-things nor the lover sent away.

Yet Geoffery had not the most distant thought of making Miss Fips his wife ; unless, indeed, circumstances compelled him so entirely to commit himself to Mr. Fips, as to be completely in his power, and so make it a matter of prudence to secure his secrecy, by what, with too many, is the only infallible bond of good faith, identity of interest. But, if on the other hand, he should

be so fortunate as not to be obliged to make use of Fips, more than as a tool, with which to work up the material in the way of extraordinary combinations of circumstances that fate seemed so liberally to have provided; and that, by the operation of those so worked, he should succeed in obtaining what had so long been the object, though for many years back the hopeless one, of his ambition—the Arden estates, Fips having nothing more to bring against him than surmises that the acquisition was not disagreeable to him—he should set at nought the tears of Miss Fips, and merely keep Fips's tongue at bay, with the agency *at will*: and as that was a thing which some one must have, it was an excellent way of securing the fellow's services first,

and even his good behaviour afterwards, on very reasonable terms. For the present, however, while all was yet at stake; while there was no saying what villainy might be necessary to carry him through; it was highly politic, to give Fips, at the outset, a motive, which would make him ready to perform any service that might be required of him.

Geoffery's calculations were perfectly just: Fips had indeed been indefatigable; and, during the two hours he had been out, had not only performed his delicate mission to the coroner, with consummate skill; but had contrived to drop in at innumerable houses, and, on pretext of asking the news, to give circulation to many evil reports and wicked surmises. He gossiped

away, in particular, about there having existed but little cordiality between the brothers of late, in consequence of an unfortunate rivalry; in which, too, he said it must be confessed that Sir Alfred was very ill-treated. And the lady was an heiress too; so that Sir Alfred being a younger brother, the match was a great object to him. He had been accepted, in fact (the lawyer declared that he had it on the best authority), when Sir Willoughby, most ungenerously interfered, and by the strength of his purse, carried off the prize.

CHAPTER III.

In consequence of the message of Geoffery, as conveyed by his unprincipled tool, Mr. Fips, together with the reports already in circulation, the coroner felt it his duty to visit Arden in his official capacity.

Alfred had hitherto, as we have stated, indulged his mournful feelings, by remaining entirely secluded.

He had given the necessary orders for the funeral, on that scale of magnificence, which the

rank, but still more the immense fortune of the deceased called for; and was beginning to flatter himself, that his endeavours to prevent the idea of a suicide becoming prevalent had been successful, and that there would be no unpleasant interference.

On being apprized, however, of the arrival of the coroner, he again felt some uneasiness on this head.

He knew that the suspicion he had himself so long entertained, of Willoughby's liability to derangement, had been ever buried in his own bosom. He even knew, strange as it may seem that such should be the privilege granted to affection, that his brother, though he loved him better than any one else in the world, had never been

half so odd and inconsistent in temper, towards any one, as towards himself; and still more, that even latterly, since the actual presence of derangement had to Alfred been clearly evident, yet, from the turn it had taken, of seemingly exuberant spirits, it had been apparent only to the anxious, watchful, constant companion, which was himself; and was not of a nature to be seen through by the careless apprehensions of servants, during merely casual attendance; but, on the contrary, was rather calculated to convey to them the idea that their master enjoyed more than his usual health and spirits. Altogether, then, it rested on his own single, unsupported evidence, to prove that his brother had been deranged, and was therefore entitled to

to be shown Sir Alfred's escritoire; on opening which, he drew forth, to the evident horror of all present, the paper of arsenic. He held it on the open palm of his extended hand, for some moments; looking round, as he did so, with a countenance of great solemnity, and, to do him justice, of sorrow. Then, delivering the packet into safe keeping, he proceeded, by virtue of his official authority, to require that the body of the deceased should be opened.

So slow was Alfred in suspecting the truth, that he still believed the coroner's sole view was to ascertain whether or not his brother had put a period to his own existence. He was, however, now obliged to submit to the required examination, the result of which was, a uni-

mous opinion on the part of the medical men present, that Sir Willoughby had died from the effects of poison, probably arsenic, but that this point might be placed beyond a doubt, the contents of the stomach were reserved to be subjected to the proper tests.

The coroner then holding his inquest in the very library in which the melancholy event had taken place, the servants, and all persons connected or supposed to be connected with the affair were severally examined. Doctor Harman, on being required so to do, produced the fatal scrap of paper which he had seen fall from within the breast of Sir Alfred's waistcoat, and the actual arsenic which, by the test of reduction he had obtained from the sediment in the glass

that Sir Alfred had attempted to rinse in his presence. The packet of arsenic was examined : it was perceived that a portion of its outer envelope had been torn away, the torn part was compared with the piece so seen to fall from the breast of Sir Alfred. The fitting together of every irregularity of the sundered portions, the texture of the material, the peculiar characters, being those of print yet done with a pen, in which the two words, "*Arsenic, Poison,*" were distinctly legible, the one on the one part, the other on the other, all clearly proved the smaller piece of paper to have once been a part of that which still contained the arsenic. The answers of the persons examined then went on to prove the various facts of the glasses having

been wiped the moment before they were brought in—of the impossibility from the situation of the arsenic, of any portion of it having fallen accidentally into either of them—of Sir Alfred having been seen in the afternoon coming from the saddle-room alone—of his previous knowledge where the arsenic lay—of the brothers having supped together, and no third person having entered the room from the time the tray had been carried in, till the alarm had been given by Sir Alfred, and Sir Willoughby found in the agonies of death—of the order for antidotes—the attempt to rinse the glass, &c. &c. &c.—and, finally, of Sir Alfred's having since refused to allow the body to be opened.

Although it was easily evident to all, but Sir Alfred himself, that the tendency of this examination was to prove him the wilful murderer of his brother, so remote was the apprehension of such a suspicion from his pure, exalted, and preoccupied thoughts, that he was long, indeed, in comprehending the nature of the proceedings. When, however, it became no longer possible to avoid drawing from all that was passing, the too evident conclusion to which every question and reply directly led, his horror was little short of that with which he would have contemplated the actual commission of the crime, had some fiend possessed the power of requiring of him such a service.

We shall not make any attempt to describe the outraged feelings of our hero on this afflicting occasion; but simply state the result of the proceedings, which was, that the coroner felt it his painful duty to commit Sir Alfred.

CHAPTER IV.

THE committal of Sir Alfred Arden for the murder of his twin brother occupied, of course, the attention of the whole country, and became for a time, almost the sole topic of conversation. The very enormity of the crime would, with many, have been a sufficient reason for disbelieving the guilt of the accused; particularly when his amiable temper, gentle manners, and honourable character were taken into consideration; but the malignity which was layed at the

root of the story at its earliest promulgation, accompanied the ramifications of report in every direction. Surmises were ingeniously mingled with facts ; motives confidently attributed to the simplest and most innocent actions, as well as to those which unfortunately had a suspicious appearance ; and ready-made opinions, prejudging the case, were artfully scattered abroad, to be picked up by the many who wanted the power or the habit of thinking for themselves.

Thus, though the personal friends of our hero flocked around him, offering him their utmost support, and refusing to give credit to any allegations derogatory to his honour, still among the indifferent and the slightly acquainted, an almost universal cry of consternation and hor-

vor was got up. People moralized about the temptation of great riches, quoted scripture to the same effect, but said the passage ought to have been translated, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a man who covets riches to enter into the kingdom of God." Others, in a more sentimental strain, spoke of the parties being not only brothers, but twin brothers; and dwelt upon the great affection Sir Willoughby had always shown to Sir Alfred! recounted every exaggerated particular of the rivalry; descanted on jealousy, and repeated from history, ancient and modern, numberless instances of crimes of the blackest die, of which that passion, from the commencement of the world to the present day, had been the fruitful source,

Here the report of Sir Alfred having been very ill-treated in the business, had its effect; and was adduced, though not, of course, in extenuation of such a crime; yet, as accounting for it on principles which experience acknowledged.

What passion so savage as revenge; what revenge so dire as that which is born of jealousy!

Mr. Fips, as a perfectly disinterested person, had, on one pretext or other, contrived to have some conversation with most of Sir Willoughby's servants, and in the course of such conversation, to insinuate the suggestions, and induce the replies, that best suited his purpose; while with long words, long faces, and terrific-sounding technicalities, he managed to arouse their selfish fears,

to a degree which banished all better feelings. Then he would shake his head, and allowing his double chin to hang with hypocritical despondency, most devoutly hope that poor Sir Alfred might be found innocent. "In that case," he would add, "it will go hard with some of you, for the poison did not get into the glass without hands; and more likely, I say, to be by any other hands, than those of his own brother. By arts like these, instead of the affectionate respect for our hero, the indignant rejection of the idea of its being possible that he could have committed such a crime, which had else been the spontaneous sentiments of all the household, some were unconsciously rendered almost willing to hear their once be-

loved young master proved guilty, as the only means of clearing and saving themselves. Such thoughts, however, naturally produced an inward discontent, that, in its turn, gave to their outward demeanour a sullenness and gloom, which had a most baneful effect on the judgments of all with whom they came in contact; for it seemed to those who knew not how it had been produced, to indicate a secret conviction of the guilt of their master.

A thousand times each day was the butler asked by some one of the party assembled in the housekeeper's room at Arden, if he were sure the glasses were quite clean when he took them into the library. Of course he always declared they were, on which, another

of the conclave, in a stage whisper, and with a face of mystery, would follow it up, by saying,

: “ Well, and from that, till we were all called in to see him in the agonies of death, there was no one near the room but their two selves.”

. “ And wasn’t the sediment the Doctor found in the bottom of the glass, arsenic ? ” observed a third.

“ And didn’t he offer to rinse the glass ? ” a fourth would ask ; “ and what could that be for ? ”

. “ And so fond of one another as they used to be when they were boys ! ” ejaculated a fifth.

"It's never been for the estate," said one of the women, and the rest of the female committee agreed with her, that it was owing to both brothers fixing their fancy on the same lady, and that Sir Alfred, that was the handsomest gentleman of the two by far, could not abide being turned off for him that had the fortune. There was many a young man, they observed, that had been the death of the girl that he was fond of, sooner than she should leave him, to go with another.

"And to give it to him at supper-time, too," said the gardener, who was a great politician, "thinking it would be put into the newspaper 'found dead in his bed,' and so hear no more of it."

The old butler could not endure all this, and was so irritated by it, that he would have quitted the house, but that Lady Arden was expected. Poor Lewin, who had long been failing, was overwhelmed by the blow; he became almost childish, at least quite lost his memory, for though he wept incessantly, he scarcely seemed to know why—sometimes speaking of Sir Willoughby as still alive, and sometimes of both brothers as already dead. While at other times, he would attempt to play on the harp, as though nothing had happened, and seem to think it a great hardship, when, from respect to decorum, he was checked by the other servants.

Whenever this occurred, he would sit for hours sounding, one by one, single strings, as if by stealth, with the silent tears of wounded vanity rolling down his cheeks, fancying, poor old man, that it was his music that was despised.

Thus, ever ready to poison joy, or add bitterness to grief, *Pride*, that arch enemy of our peace, still survives, when the mind is else a wreck.

Pride is surely that evil spirit portrayed in scripture as “wandering to and fro, seeking whom he may devour;” that is, whom he may make wicked—whom he may make miserable; deceiving even the generous of heart, by exalting them in their own opinion,

till their *pride* requires of others a homage which the *pride* of others will not yield ; and so, resenting the supposed deficiency, they cease to be in charity with all men.

CHAPTER V.

LADY Arden was in town, and busied in preparations for the marriage of Madeline, when Alfred's letter, announcing the sudden death of Sir Willoughby, reached her. The signs and trappings of approaching festivity were, of course, changed for those of mourning. But who shall describe the consternation of this affectionate mother, when the astounding intelligence was brought to her, that her

child, her darling, her favourite, now her only son, was actually committed to a felon's prison, accused of the murder of his brother.

It was some moments before her comprehension could grasp the whole extent of the horrors connected with such an intimation. She was bewildered, she seemed to be in a trance; yet, through it all, her own perfect knowledge of the utter impossibility of such an accusation having the slightest foundation in truth, was a kind of upholding to her spirit, inasmuch as it appeared also impossible to her mind, that any being could give reception to such a thought. Unable to speak connectedly, she alternated the expressions, "No, no—Oh no," continually, while looking

round her with a strange wild eye, that seemed to flash, yet saw not.

The want she felt was to be with her son; but though she moved rapidly, and often turned quite round, she was incapable, at the time, of distinguishing the door from the windows of the apartment she was in.

It was only by the kind intervention of Mrs. Dorothea, that Lady Arden's wishes were at length understood, and accomplished.

Mrs. Dorothea was in town for the purpose of being present at Madeline's wedding; which was so far fortunate, as she was, on the present occasion, a great support to her afflicted sister-in-law; and kindly accompanied her on her journey to Arden.

On entering the town, Lady Arden was asked where she would choose to go. "Where?" she repeated, "Take me where he is."

She was driven to the gates of the gaol; she looked at them, and at Mrs. Dorothea.

When last she had passed through the streets of Arden, the triumphal arches and laurel wreaths, the remnants of the previous day's rejoicings, for the coming of age of her twin sons, were not yet taken down.—Now, one son lay a quarter of a mile distant, within the stately mansion of his fathers, a yet unburied corse;—she waited at the door of a common prison for admittance to the other.

Mrs. Dorothea's eyes met hers, but neither spoke. Becoming suddenly collected, Lady

Arden alighted from the carriage with a firm step, and entered the dismal precincts as proudly as though the portals of a palace had received her.

Alfred had been warned of her approach. He stood breathless, and with a beating heart. Without a word uttered on either side, they rushed into each other's arms. In continued silence the mother held the son to her bosom, as though she felt, instinctively, that it was his natural sanctuary.

Though at first melted by the tenderest sorrow, in the embraces of his parent, our hero soon assumed a noble firmness. He had already passed eight-and-forty hours in solitary reflection on his extraordinary fate.

"I do not ask you, mother," he said, "not to weep, for we have a common cause of sorrow in the untimely and sudden death of my poor brother: but add not one tear for me; believe me, there is not, there cannot be, a shadow of danger in the position in which I stand; although public opinion, I am told, is against me. Is it not," he added, in an altered tone, "a degrading view of human nature, to see that so many individuals should be found ready to believe such a crime possible? As to the result of a fair and open trial, however, I repeat it, I have no fears!"

"In a land professing to prefer mercy before judgment; in a land with laws so constituted, that lest an error should be committed

on the side of severity, the criminal, whom all know to be guilty, is allowed to escape unpunished, if but a technicality of legal proof be wanting; in a land, one of the boasts of which is, that no man is required to prove his own innocence, but that all are by law innocent until proved guilty; in such a land it must be quite impossible that, on mere appearances, they should strip of honour and of life one whose thoughts were never visited by the conception of a crime! Nay, I speak it not in unchristian pride, but, compared with that of which they would accuse me, I feel that I am innocent indeed!"

After a long pause, during which they had gazed silently in each other's faces, Alfred,

as a sort of effort to converse, said, "How much we are struck with the merest commonplaces, when they happen to suit our own individual case: 'innocent as the babe unborn,' now seems to me a beautiful expression."

Lady Arden felt much comforted by the firmness of her son;—his views were her own; though within the walls of a prison, and surrounded with every practical proof of the peril in which he stood, she could not look at Alfred, his lofty carriage, the nobleness of his brow, and force her imagination to associate with him the idea of a condemned criminal—it seemed a thing impossible! "No!" she haughtily exclaimed, "acquitted he must be, but how have they dared to accuse him?"

Alfred now explained the hitherto unexpressed fears, which he had so long entertained, respecting his brother's state of mind, and went into all the particulars of his late return to Arden, and subsequent death. As he drew up in array the extraordinary circumstances, inexplicable to any one but himself, on which the accusation against him was founded, Lady Arden felt a pang of terror paralyse her heart, but as his simple explanations followed, she would exclaim, "Is not that sufficient? Is not that sufficient?"

"In the mouth of an impartial witness, such explanations would be all-sufficient," he replied, "but remember I am the person accused."

"Accused!" she repeated, then gazed

with a mother's rapturous love, on the guileless expression of his parted lip, as to comfort her he tried to smile, she fondly poured forth expressions of endearment.

" Alfred, my child ! my mild, my innocent, my beautiful Alfred ! my gentle, my affectionate, my noble Alfred !" She paused, and, by the working of her features, terrible thoughts seemed to pass in view before her.

" Oh, impossible !" she suddenly exclaimed, clasping him with convulsive agony to her breast, " quite impossible ! But if they are so mad," she added, in a hurried tone of subdued agony " they shall saw these arms asunder before they take him from me !" He was too much affected to reply. Again she

Yet this was, by no means, the most agonizing period of this season of trial. The situation was too novel to be comprehended in its full extent. There was, as yet, more of incredulous amazement, and of proud defiance of the accuser, than of despair or even of apprehension in the feelings both of Lady Arden and of Alfred. They were both at present more indignant that such an outrage had been offered, and that submission to insulting and degrading forms was still necessary, than seriously alarmed as to future consequences.

CHAPTER VI.

IN the parlour to which we have already been introduced, sat Mr. Fips—over his wine it must be confessed, yet apparently uniting the *utile et dulce*; for beside his bottle of port stood an ink-bottle; amid walnut-shells and remnants of biscuit lay sundry long-shaped folded papers, and though he held a glass in his hand, from which he sipped from time to time, there was a pen behind his ear; his wig was pushed on one side and Geoffery was his companion.

"Should we not subpoena Lady Arden?" asked Fips.

"By all means," replied Geoffery, "her evidence will be of great importance: we can prove by it, that Sir Alfred had actually made proposals to and been accepted by Lady Caroline, the very day before his brother came to town: and also, that he felt his disappointment much more bitterly than was generally supposed."

Here Geoffery repeated the particulars of a conversation on the subject, which it may be remembered he once overheard, between Lady Arden and her son. And Fips took down notes, for suggesting questions to counsel.

"Do you think," he said, "there would be any

use in sending subpoenas to Lady Palliser and her daughter?"

"No, on the contrary, I have reason to suspect, some circumstances might come out on their examination, rather calculated to raise a doubt in the minds of jurors; I am therefore better pleased that they are on the continent."

"When did they go abroad?"

"A short time before the death of Sir Wellington; immediately after his return to London."

"Are they likely to be brought forward on the other side, think you?"

"I should say not: from the conversations I have had with Sir Alfred, I should think that

he was not at all aware that their evidence could be of the slightest service to him."

" You seem to have more reasons for thinking so, Mr. Arden," said Fips, " than you have been pleased to confide to me. Now 'tis well and wisely said, that a man, for his own sake, should have no secrets either from his doctor or his lawyer. That, however, is your look out; I can only serve you to the best of my ability, as far as my information goes."

" Which is quite as far as mine, I assure you Fips. It was merely my own surmise, that Sir Willoughby might not have been quite as well received latterly as his vanity had, at first, led him to believe he should be. Now, I naturally thought that such an idea being promulgated,

might suggest the possibility of Sir Willoughby's having taken the poison himself; which idea, though not amounting to evidence on either side, might, as I said before, raise doubts in the minds of a jury, calculated to bias their judgments, and so defeat the ends of justice."

"I thought," observed Fips, sulkily, for he fancied he saw that Geoffery was playing an underhand game, "I understood you to have said, you had reasons for your opinion."

"Yes, so I have—those I have just stated."

He had others, however, which he had not stated, because, as we have said, he did not wish to put himself absolutely in Fips's power, unless there should be no other means of gaining his end.

"His sisters too," continued Geoffery, "and his aunt Mrs. Dorothea, can be produced to prove so far, that Sir Alfred, before the appearance of his brother on the stage, was an assiduous, and believed himself to be a favoured lover. I do not mean to say, that either this or Lady Arden's evidence would be any proof of Sir Alfred's guilt; but, by adding the incentives of jealousy and revenge to that of mere avarice, it makes his having committed the crime much less improbable, and must therefore influence, more or less, the minds of the jury."

When the various subjects under discussion were arranged and the bottle of port finished, Mr. Fips repaired to his office—for he was a labourer at his vocation, late, as well as early—

a burlesque : a stranger would seriously have thought, that the most polite thing they could do was to stand by and laugh openly. Her shakes were shudders, and seemed to have been produced by a sort of second-sight view of some approaching horror, invisible to all beside. Her prolonged notes resembled the howls of a chained dog, on a moonlight night ; while her abrupt changes, and impassioned passages, were the starts and yells of a maniac.

Without somewhat of the grace of natural timidity, the most splendid performance could scarcely please ; with what feeling then, but that of unqualified disgust, could such a display as we have just described have been witnessed ; while Geoffery, who had the part of a lover not

only of music, but of the lady to maintain, was thereby called upon to enact raptures.

Fips's wife had died, in giving birth to this only child. Fips was then a poor clerk. When the child began to require the aid of a first school, he lodged in a garret, and dined in a cellar, that he might be able to defray the expense. Yet, strange to say, notwithstanding this seeming noble self-denial, his was not a worthy nor a genuine affection; he was incapable of such. In the first place, he was naturally a man of parsimonious habits, and imbued with a prudent sense of the necessity of giving to persons unprovided for, at least an education, that they might be able to do something for themselves. The sentiment, however, which he mistook for

affection, was little better than gratified vanity. The child happened to be very beautiful; to which his attention was particularly drawn, by the circumstance of his being often obliged, for want of mother or nurse-maid, to walk out with it himself. When he did so, almost every one they met would turn to look or to make some comment as they passed. Sometimes, groups would stop and speak to the child; kiss it, ask it to shake hands, &c. On such occasions Fips would stop also, and becoming imboldened, desire his little girl to look up, and show its pretty eyes; to laugh, and show its pretty teeth; then, its pretty mouth, its rosy lips, its lovely colour, its beautiful skin, its pretty curls, its pretty foot, would each in succession form a

medium of gratified va
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traveller. The possessio
of time, suggested the
able finishing-school alr

The orders were given

highly accomplished. These accomplishments, in all their various stages, became at each vacation the subjects of new displays ; till at length the young lady came home the perfect singer of Italian bravuras, performance of which we have just witnessed ; and furthermore imbued with a thorough contempt for her vulgar, and except in the chicanery of the law, ignorant father. Of this contempt she made no secret ; but on the contrary, laughed at his opinions and scoffed at his authority, on the plea of being herself a much better judge of every thing, save, as she expressed it, of musty parchments.

All men, besides a natural dislike to milliners' bills, let them be ever so clumsy in every thing else, have a sort of notion of what is becoming to women in dress.



things on. She
equipped to step
country town, dress
line, extremely shor
and ankle; her stock
broidery, the slippers
yellow crape, adorned
ostrich feathers tip
wore, flung across on
the contrary arm, a h
scarf, and held perpe
that it might neither

lilac parasol, deeply bordered with a gold-coloured net-work fringe, and tasseled at every point. Chains, ear-rings, bracelets, brooches, clasps, watch, and reticule, were of course none of them forgotten ; while the very backs of the canary-coloured kid gloves were embroidered with lilac and gold.

Fips's remark was received with a sneer, and "I beg, sir, you'll mind your parchments, and give me leave to be the best judge of my dress."

" Well, well, my dear, follow your own way."

" That I shall, sir, you may rest assured."

Such a figure as we have described, walking the streets alone, with a bold erect car-

riage, it may be believed, drew a good deal of attention, particularly at assize-time, when there were many strangers and young barristers in the town, and such of course were the occasions on which Miss Fips was fondest of making a display. Her generally walking alone, at least until she had picked up two or three young men, proceeded from a combination of circumstances : in the first place, Fips had little time for recreation, and if he had had more, his dutiful daughter would not have been fond of appearing with so unwieldy and unsightly a companion. As to other young women, Miss Fips, proud of her beauty, and the fortune she was taught to expect, treated those in her own sphere with impertinence,

while it was very improbable that ladies in a sphere above her would be induced to take by the hand an inferior, whose natural boldness rendered her vulgarity and bad taste so conspicuous. Though we have used the expression natural boldness, it is most probable that the unprepossessing quality we have thus described, was in this instance both produced and strengthened into second nature by that most baneful and unsexing of lessons to a young female, early *personal display*.

The remaining traits in the character of this young woman, together with what we have already said, are quite in accordance with a favourite theory of ours, that want of personal modesty is more than a presumption both of

want of heart and want of taste or genius; because it is a proof of the absence of that susceptibility — that acuteness of moral perception, the presence of which is indispensable to the mental process by which both the powers of genius and the capability of loving are developed, almost, we might say, created in the human mind.

Flattery too, with the want of early control, had made the temper of Miss Fips violent and insolent in the extreme. From the time of her return from school there was no peace in the house, and little, as far as their own set went, in the town. She quarrelled with the neighbours—insulted the boarder clerks—and scolded the servants; and when Fips was too busy

with his own, if not more amiable, at least more important avocations, to join her in pouring forth invectives against whoever had provoked her ire, she would stand over his desk and scold himself; or interrupted in a like tempestuous manner, the quiet enjoyment of his bottle of port, his only recreation, till his life became a perfect burden to him.

Still he toiled on—her aggrandizement being the sole object of his labours; nay, he entered eagerly into projects which he could not but be aware must condemn his soul to perdition, to secure to her a marriage above her sphere, and add wealth to wealth still for her! And why? Because his daughter, undutiful and disrespectful though she was, happened to be

the part and portion of himself, in which his vanity, his ambition, his *pride* had centered; and his selfishness, when he remembered that he could not carry his riches with him to the grave, sought in her a sort of immortality, at least a prolongation of existence. Yet did this unprincipled being sanctify to himself, (strange sophistry) many a sin, by the belief that he was the fondest of fathers, and did every thing for the love of his only child.

CHAPTER VII.

THE death of Sir Willoughby occurred within so short a period of the assizes, that the immediate approach of Alfred's trial gave to the whole terrific transaction the character of a sudden and awful thunder-storm

Lady Arden and her son, desirous of supporting each other, mutually acted a part painful to both, incessantly concealing their feelings, and denying themselves the solace of unreserved intercourse: whatever their separate thoughts

were, neither would confess to the other that they had any apprehensions as to the result of the approaching trial. And yet the conduct of their legal advisers was by no means culculated to inspire confidence. These gentlemen looked extremely grave, asked both Alfred and Lady Arden many questions, and seemed much disappointed at their replies. They were agreed in opinion that the chain of circumstantial evidence was unbroken—almost irresistible ; and that the only defence which could be set up was the insanity, and consequently possible suicide of Sir Willoughby.

While the idea of his being insane, never having been entertained by any one but Sir Alfred, nor even by Sir Alfred himself sug-

gested to any one, till after he, Sir Alfred, was actually accused of the murder, it was to be feared the plea would not even be listened to. And yet the idea of Sir Willoughby's having wilfully taken poison, while in possession of his right mind, was still more unlikely to be heard, from his very advantageous circumstances at all times, and the peculiarly happy prospects he at that particular crisis enjoyed. The combinations and coincidences too of trivial events were no less unoward; for all of those, and they were many, which told against our hero, could be established by a host of creditable witnesses; whilst the few which were in his favour were known to no human being but himself; nor had he even spoken of them to any one, until, as in

the former plea, after he had been accused. Alfred had a faint and rather confused remembrance of having said something of his motives to Geoffery, in the first moments of affliction. He mentioned this to his lawyers. They had a conference with Mr. Arden on the subject. He replied, but without entering into any explanation, that if they chose to put him in the witness box, he should esteem himself happy, if anything he could say with truth, should have any tendency to exculpate his cousin. He was accordingly subpoenaed, and was the only witness for the defence.

The plea of Sir Alfred's amiable and honourable character rendering it highly improbable that he should have committed such a crime;

though it must be felt by all, and with his immediate circle of friends and intimates, was all sufficient, could not weigh one feather as evidence. We had, unhappily, instances of persons previously of unblemished character, departing from that character in practice, when strongly tempted by passion, revenge, or avarice; and in this case all these incentives seemed to have been united.

Opinions so alarming, were of course not distinctly stated by the lawyers, either to Lady Arden, or to Alfred. To have done so, would have been an unnecessary degree of cruelty. But such were the sentiments they entertained, and much of which could be implied, not only from their whole demeanor, but, as we have already

said, both from the anxious questions they put, and the evasive answers they gave. All this had a fearful effect on the feelings of Lady Arden: concealed agony, and constant fever, were devouring the vital energies, while her mind laid waste, as it were, by so immeasurable, so incomprehensible a calamity, seemed defenceless against the superstitious impressions and wild images of horror which wearied her spirit and aggravated her sufferings, by the ceaseless importunity with which they blended themselves unbidden with the wretched realities of the hour.

The presence of Geoffery too, which she was occasionally compelled to endure, was terrible to her feelings. She literally shuddered as she

looked on the man who was destined, should her most horrible apprehensions be realized, to fill the place of both her sons. And notwithstanding the subdued air of solemnity and sorrow he hypocritically assumed in her presence, she found it impossible to divest herself of the idea that she could detect triumph lurking in the depths of his sinister eye; and that his hard spare lips were more than usually compressed, to prevent the corners of his mouth from curling with a fiendish joy; for of such a feeling she did inwardly accuse him. With what thoughts would she have viewed him, could she have known that he was, through his secret emissaries, labouring at the very moment to fix upon the innocent Alfred that horrible accu-

sation, of which he alone could have proved him innocent ; but this was a degree of wickedness of which she was incapable of conceiving the idea. She could not suspect even Geoffery of such.

With the gentlemen of the country too, Geoffery attempted to act a part which in fact he greatly over-acted. He sought every opportunity to dwell at great length on the painful and delicate situation in which he was placed. He sincerely hoped, he said, that Sir Alfred might be fully cleared of so revolting an accusation ; yet he confessed he could not himself see how the distinct chain of circumstantial evidence, which had already appeared, was to be got over. He hoped, however, that some-

thing favourable might come out on the trial, and most especially he hoped that he might not be called upon to take any part whatever. Yet, if it was indeed possible that Sir Alfred was guilty, he could not wish to see him escape the just punishment his aggravated crime would, in that case, so fully merit ; nay, such he declared was his indignation when he took this view of the subject, that if it were not fortunately the duty of the crown to prosecute, he should feel himself called upon—nay, bound to do so ; bound to sacrifice every private feeling towards the offender, and as the nearest male relative of poor Sir Willoughby, stand forward the avenger of his untimely end. Yet as he had, he might say, the misfortune to be the

next heir to the property, he considered it a happy circumstance that he was not obliged to act, what some might consider an invidious part. He used the expression misfortune, for it certainly would be a misfortune to inherit a venerable family property through the medium of a catastrophe so awful, and what was even worse, so disgraceful ; in fact, should the affair so terminate, it was more than probable that he should become almost an exile from the family mansion, at least for many years ; he did not know indeed that he should ever be able to bring himself to live at Arden.

These indelicate communications, though murmured in an under tone, and given as much as possible the air of individual confidences,

were, from time to time, forced on as many hearers as Geoffery could obtain ; for it was not all who would listen to him—many, and those some of the leading men of the country, were indignant at the attempt to bring such an accusation against our hero.

The funeral of Sir Willoughby was naturally delayed by the committal of Alfred, under whose authority the preparations had been proceeding. No one seemed aware what was to be done, or whose orders were to be given and received. Geoffery indeed was disposed to take upon himself the command, as well as the part of chief mourner, in Alfred's place, but this Lady Arden arrived in time to prevent.

When appealed to, she clasped her hands and

raised her eyes to heaven for a few moments, as if she there sought counsel, then with admirable dignity and presence of mind, she ordered that the solemn preparations should stand still till the necessary forms of law having been gone through, her son should be at liberty to take his place at the head of his brother's grave ; inferring thus, by her reply, that there existed not a doubt of Alfred's innocence being established.

Accordingly, in pursuance of these commands, the remains of her eldest son still lay in state at Arden, when the anxious day arrived on which her younger son was to stand at the bar of justice, arraigned for the murder of his brother.

While thus Lady Arden proudly strove to have it thought, nay, if possible to think herself, that she had no fears for Alfred ; how, but by the absorbing nature of her fears for him was the blunted state of her feelings on all other subjects to be accounted for. The death of Willoughby, had it come alone, with what deep sorrow would it have afflicted her ; and how greatly would that sorrow have been aggravated, by but a suspicion that he had committed the awful act of suicide ; yet to have that suspicion proved beyond a doubt, was now the only hope of her existence ; while the simple fact of Willoughby's death was driven by the exigences of the hour from its natural position in her mind, and viewed as it were in the dis-

CHAPTER VIII.

THE night before the trial, Lady Arden, by especial favour and kind connivance, passed in the prison of her son. She knelt at the side of the bed, on which she had insisted on his laying himself, and, if possible, sleeping, in order that he might obtain strength and composure for the task which awaited him.

After many last words and repeated affectionate entreaties, that he would try the effect of silence and stillness, at length, with a hand

fondly clasped in both his mother's, he did sleep, though but for a short time, as calmly as an infant. Lady Arden, in the position in which she knelt, shaded from his countenance the immediate glare of the lamp which stood on a small table behind her. Sufficient light, however, still rested on his sleeping features to give to her fond gaze all their loveliness. The perfect beauty they always possessed, the more than common share of a mother's love she had ever borne him, the enthusiasm of every feeling naturally exerted by his impending peril, altogether called up such emotions, that she seemed to look on the face of an angel; while fast falling tears unconsciously inundated her cheeks, as memory pourtrayed the infant

years of this her darling son ;—the smiling babe sleeping in her bosom ; the laughing child playing at her feet. Then followed pictures of his boyish sports and gleeful hours, till her heart bled ; then traits of docile obedience and dutiful affection ; and, as he grew in years, of that gentle, noble, self-immolating nature, so peculiarly his own. All these were remembered with tender yearnings which no words can describe. A fearful idea next presented itself, that such beings were but lent to earth ; they were not destined to sojourn with us ; in a moment of agony and terror to those left behind, they were caught up again, and absorbed by that all-perfect spirit of which they were but emanations. Such thoughts gave, for a time,

a character of wildness to the fervour of her prayers; confusion of every faculty followed; she became unconscious of the purport of the words she rapidly uttered; and then her lips ceased to move: a silent statue, with hands and eyes uplifted, one solitary thought possessed her being; it was, that in her helplessness she knelt at the foot-stool of Him who had restored to life the widow's son when he was already dead, and had given him back to his mother. Her son was still alive; the mercy that had restored surely could preserve. Alfred smiled in his sleep, and gently pressing the hand which still held his, suddenly opened his eyes with an expression which showed that for a second he knew not where he was. Short

was the respite: in a moment more, the shade of pain which passed over his brow, and the look of anxious, kind inquiry which followed, as his eye met that of his mother, proved that consciousness had returned.

Morning was near; and though there were still many lingering hours of suspense to get through, sleep was thought of no more—conversation was renewed—every minute particular again enumerated—Alfred's defence reconsidered.

His language, the expression of his countenance as he spoke, had again the effect of awaking a proud confidence in the mind of Lady Arden, that it was impossible for any one to believe him guilty. As for Alfred himself,

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trial, the expression of many a countenance did so ; while also the very excess of almost reverential consideration for himself seemed to infer such a feeling ; and she could not forgive any one, however kind and well-meaning, who did not spurn with unequivocal contempt, as the breath of pestilential slander, the thought of an accusation against her son. Such an accusation, too ! and against such a son !

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long, slight, white wands, which seemed to be split at the point for the purpose, notes, letters, and folded papers, to the various individuals who sat round, out of reach of communication by any other means; some, indeed, employed the still less ceremonious mode of flinging across the table little folded notes, not larger than butterflies, of which a pretty constant flight was thus kept up. The personages round this table we may mention, for the benefit of those not conversant with the inside of a court-house, were principally barristers in their wigs and gowns. The few eminent ones, who had any thing to do, had clerks seated at their elbows, and all had beside them large green or purple baize or serge bags, purporting to contain papers, but in many

moment, supposed of harboring more sand-
wich than ~~bread~~. Beside the counsel for the
~~sand~~, whose business it was to conduct the
prosecution of Sir Alfred Arden, sat wedged
with difficulty into the limited space allotted
him, and seriously perusing over his documents,
Mr. Fox. A Pique above, and immediately
below him, in the lowest row of seats appro-
priated to spectators, sat Geoffrey Arden, with
Miss Fox. whose style of dress, if possible, was
more extravagantly absurd, and indecorously
showy than ever, which, together with the im-
passive swinging of her hat and feathers,
made her a most conspicuous figure. Indeed
she and her paramour might be said to act
more effectively the part of a flying flag, point-

ing out to the spectators in general where this group of principal characters were to be found.

It had been weighed by Lady Arden and her many friends, whether her ladyship should await in an adjacent retired room, communicating by a private door with the gallery, or how; or where she had better be placed to be ready to appear with least exertion, when called upon for her evidence. She had herself, however, decided that the suspense of not hearing and knowing what was going on, even at every step, would be more impossible to endure, than any agony however hard to bear, to which being present throughout could subject her. She was therefore already placed in the corner of the gallery, nearest the witness box,

but purposely so surrounded by a group of her own most particular friends, as to be effectually screened from general observation. With her ladyship was Mrs. Dorothea, Lady Darlingford, and Madeline, all of whom had been subpoenaed as witnesses.

The judge now returning into court, took his seat on the bench, with an air of even more than usual solemnity. The prisoner was called to the bar.

“ Do not, do not look ! ” said Mrs. Dorothea, bending across, and interposing herself between Lady Arden and the view of the dock. But Lady Arden had already covered her face, naturally shrinking from the fearful trial of seeing her son enter.

Alfred appeared. He was aware that a great portion of those present must be persons well known to him. He had no reason to shrink from the scrutinizing gaze of any one. With quiet dignity, therefore, on his first entrance, he looked all round the court, and few were found who had callousness to resist his mild, calm, clear eye, the expression of which was rather an appeal to the better feelings of humanity than that angry defiance of his accusers, which his circumstances might have almost justified ; and which, perhaps, even he would have experienced, had not solemn and tender regret for the fact itself of his brother's untimely death, softened and subdued his feelings. Such was the immediate effect, both of his countenance

The ~~present~~ ~~state~~ of the ~~republic~~ made on
the ~~present~~ ~~state~~ of the ~~republic~~ in his; that,
~~present~~ ~~republic~~ upon a much larger
part of the ~~present~~ ~~territory~~ of the country,
the ~~present~~ ~~republic~~ is the ~~present~~ ~~territory~~ very
likely ~~present~~ ~~republic~~ that a ~~present~~ ~~territory~~ had been
already ~~present~~ ~~republic~~, which though in itself
nothing but was a ~~present~~ ~~territory~~, well cal-
culated to impede the ~~present~~ ~~republic~~, namely, that
a ~~present~~ ~~republic~~ and ~~present~~ ~~territory~~ worthy of
~~present~~ ~~republic~~ it is the duty of
~~present~~ ~~republic~~ to ~~present~~ ~~territory~~ the administration of

justice is entrusted, to show them that there is not one law for the rich and another for the poor. It is not because a gentleman can get ninety thousand a-year by murdering his brother that he is to be allowed to do so with impunity, when a poor man, who sees his wife and children starving and steals a sheep to feed them, must be hanged!

This popular proposition, in the abstract so perfectly just, Fips had at the very first given out, as a sort of text to preach from, to one or two vulgar, vehement, levelling friends of his own; and from that moment affected himself, as became the attorney who was to conduct the prosecution, the most prudent taciturnity possible.

Promised, then, with these abstract ideas, and very unwilling to apply them in the ~~present~~ case, the ~~class~~ of persons alluded to saw in the ~~imminent~~ ~~sudden~~ ~~death~~ of our hero's aspect no ~~wider~~ ~~intention~~ than a confidence, which they were ~~desirous~~ to show him was ill-founded, and his trust in ~~him~~ was almost a guarantee against ~~any~~ ~~such~~ ~~extremity~~ of the law.

The indictment was now read aloud, and Mr. Wilkes heard himself accused, with awful ~~suddenness~~, of the wilful murder of his brother, Sir Everard Astor. He ~~instantly~~ and ~~firmly~~ ~~admitted~~ giving to him a certain portion ~~of~~ ~~strong~~ ~~rum~~ ~~in~~ ~~rum~~ wine and water. The ~~whole~~ ~~of~~ ~~which~~ remained ~~the~~ ~~jury~~; and the ~~whole~~ ~~of~~ ~~which~~ ~~arose~~ ~~from~~

opening the case by a speech to the jury, proceeded to call and examine witnesses. The first of these were the servants who had been hastily called into the room by Alfred when Sir Willoughby was dying. They swore to the deceased being insensible, and in convulsions when they entered the room, to his having been apparently in perfect health at and after dinner ; to Alfred's having, in his first alarm, called aloud for antidotes against poison, naming arsenic in particular. Dr. Harman was next examined. He proved, that at the time he arrived Sir Willoughby was quite dead ; that he believed his death to have been occasioned by poison—that poison arsenic. He then underwent a tedious cross-examination, as to the

tests of arsenic. He had made poisons much his study. He had attended the opening of the body. The state of the stomach denoted the presence of some corrosive stimulant. Arsenic is a corrosive stimulant. He had applied to the contents of the stomach several tests, such as sulphate of copper, ammoniacal sulphate of copper, nitrate of silver ; ammoniacal nitrate of silver ; and sulphuretted hydrogen gas ; the results of all denoted the presence of arsenic ; there was an immense precipitate of arsenic, quite enough to kill a man. Being asked, had not every test which had been tried for the last century and half been said to be fallacious, he replied, that if this were true of the tests separately, yet, when the results of three were uni-

form, no chemist could have a doubt, but that he had also had recourse to the infallible test of reduction, by which he had obtained crystals of white arsenic. Had he not said that a fit might have been attended by similar symptoms? He had. What, then, had confirmed him in his belief, that the deceased had died by the effects of poison? Inward appearances, on the body being opened, and an examination of the contents of the stomach.

Parts of this gentleman's evidence were supported by that of several other medical men.

Some judiciously put questions then drew from the reluctant Doctor the fact of Alfred's attempt to rince the glass, in which a sediment of arsenic was subsequently found, and his

seen glide from within the breast of his waist-coat and fall to the ground, a piece of paper marked poison, and which was found, on being lifted up, to contain among its folds a few remaining grains of arsenic. He here produced, being called on so to do, the piece of paper described. The packet of arsenic being missed on the morning after Sir Willoughby's death, from where it had lain on the previous day, was next proved by several servants. That the prisoner knew where it lay was also proved. The groom then swore to having seen the prisoner coming alone from the saddle-room (a place he was not in the habit of frequenting) with a similar packet in his hand. Next was proved the subsequent finding of a packet of arsenic by

the Coroner, in a locked escritoire of the prisoner's, and of which the prisoner kept the keys about his person. The packet of arsenic was now produced in court, and identified on oath by several servants. The piece of paper which Dr. Harman had seen fall from within the waist-coat of the prisoner, was here shown to the Judge, and handed from one to another of the Jury, together with the packet, from the outer covering of which, it was evident to all eyes, that the smaller piece had been torn, apparently as the readiest vehicle which offered, for carrying away a portion of the poison. The reluctance of the prisoner to permit the body of the deceased to be opened, was proved by several medical gentlemen, as well as by other persons

his not, in short, yielding this point till compelled so to do by the authority of the Coroner.

The servants of the house, and such persons as had seen Sir Willoughby since his return to Arden were next strictly examined, and cross-examined, respecting his health, spirits, and sanity. All swore without hesitation, that up to the last moment on which each had held communication with him he had been in good health, in excellent spirits, and perfectly sane. The elderly squire, who, it may be remembered, had met the brothers out riding, on the day of the evening on which the death of Sir Willoughby took place, having chanced, when the sudden demise became known, to mention the meeting, together with the nature of the con-

versation which had passed, Mr. Fips in his diligence and zeal had made him out and sent him a subpoena.

This gentleman was next examined, and his evidence proved that Sir Willoughby, a few hours before his death had been in high health and spirits, and had spoken freely of his intended marriage and projected tour. This seemed conclusive. After hearing such evidence from a respectable and disinterested witness, it appeared quite impossible to believe that Sir Willoughby, a few hours subsequent to this conversation, should have sought to put a period to his own existence. Many persons were questioned as to whether the prisoner had expressed any doubt of the sanity of his brother,

or any suspicion of his having taken poison, previous to the time of the accusation of his having administered the poison to his brother, having been brought home to himself on the coroner's inquest; no one had heard him express an opinion of the kind before the time alluded to, except indeed any inference might be drawn of a secret knowledge that poison had been taken or administered, from his having, in the first moments of confusion, called anxiously for antidotes against the effects of arsenic. The counsel for the prosecution argued, that this told against the prisoner. It proved a guilty knowledge of the fact, that arsenic had been swallowed. A feeling of remorse seemed to have induced the effort to save his brother's

life, even at the risk of exposure ; but no sooner was Sir Willoughby dead, than the prisoner makes every effort to conceal that poison had been taken. For the acuteness of this remark, the counsel was indebted to a marginal note annexed to his brief by Mr. Fips. As a matter of form, persons were next examined as to the amount of the property to which the prisoner, by the death of his brother became sole heir.

When the enormous sum was sworn to, many a one sighed involuntarily to think, from how many anxious cares one year's income of such estates would relieve them.

Lady Arden's evidence being the next required, and every consideration being granted

to her ladyship's feelings, the Judge had humanely sent a message round to request that Lady Arden might not be hurried.

A pause therefore ensued, during which were wrought up to the highest pitch, expectation, compassion, and that strange curiosity incident to human nature, to see how others can endure when suffering is extreme.

CHAPTER X.

At length, in the midst of perfect stillness, without one preparatory sound or movement, Lady Arden stood in the witness box, wrapped in the deep mourning in which the death of her elder son had enveloped her.

The blood ran cold in the veins of all present. A tear startled into almost every eye; while some of those who were themselves mothers, were moved by a sympathy so

heart-rending, that unconsciously they groaned aloud.

So pure, so natural, so easily understood are the feelings of the parent, that every class could enter into them. Nor did the kindly commiseration of the crowd diminish, when they had leisure to mark the matronly beauty of her countenance; pride and disdain of the insult offered to the hitherto unsullied honour of her son, struggling with agony kindled in her eye, while her cheek was blanched, and her lips parched: and then the strong resemblance her every feature bore to those of her son! her favourite child! the prisoner at the bar: while evidently conscious where he stood, her eye quivered beneath its lid, longing yet dreading to

turn upon him. She could no longer resist—she looked down at her son—he looked up at her—their eyes met.

To comfort and encourage her he tried almost to smile : it was rather a radiance from within shining for a moment through all the nobleness of his countenance, in honour of the dutiful love he bore her ; and then a pang passed across his brow, that he should be to her a source of suffering. She sank on a chair considerably placed behind her, and for a few seconds hid her face ; lest, however, emotion should be construed into fear, and fear into acquiescence in the accusation against her son, she aroused herself and again stood prepared to reply. The judge, from a feeling of respect, took upon him-

self a considerable part of the duty of putting the necessary questions to her ladyship. He did so in the mildest and most considerate manner, and in a tone of kindly sympathy which did credit to his heart—the counsel of course assisting, and assisted himself as hitherto, by the marginal notes to his brief, supplied by Mr. Fips. These had the effect of drawing from her ladyship the purport of the confidential conversation overheard by Geoffery, which, with the remainder of Lady Arden's evidence, clearly proved the following points; namely—that both brothers had been attached to the same lady—that Alfred had been accepted previously to the arrival of his brother—that subsequently he had been discarded and his brother accepted—that he had

felt his disappointment more deeply than he had suffered to appear—that he had ascribed the fickleness of the lady to mercenary motives—and that he was in the habit of animadverting frequently on the unfortunate situation of younger brothers without fortune, and therefore without pretensions.

In reply to another series of questions, she was compelled to confess, she had never apprehended that derangement might at any time be the consequence of the injury Sir Willoughby had in childhood received on his head—that she had never perceived any symptoms of derangement about her eldest son—that Alfred had never mentioned to her any apprehensions of the kind till after the present

accusation had been brought against himself—that in his letter, announcing the sudden death of his brother, he had ascribed it to a fit of apoplexy, and made no mention of poison under any circumstances being the supposed cause, or expressed a suspicion either of insanity or suicide—and lastly, that Sir Willoughby at the time of his demise was in full possession of a large unencumbered property, and in expectation of being married to the woman of his choice, a lady also possessed of large estates, and who, in company with her mother, he was very shortly to have joined in a tour of pleasure on the continent.

The evidence of Lady Darlingford, Madeline, and Mrs. Dorothea, were taken in succession,

and though not so full, went to prove the same points as that of Lady Arden. This closed the prosecution, and the prisoner was now called upon for his defence.

Who shall describe the throb of his mother's heart, when the first sounds from those loved lips broke the stillness of the expectant court. The tones of that voice were harmony itself; they had ever been music to her ear—what were they now? Oh, how strange is the mingling of agony with the thrill of love!

A momentary convulsion passed over the mother's features, followed by a silent flood of tears; yet, with that self-command which dire necessity alone can teach, no sob that might be heard, no sigh escaped her.

Alfred spoke with solemnity of the melancholy impression which had often visited his own mind respecting the possibility of his brother becoming at some time insane ; but confessed, that he had never mentioned his fears to any one. He spoke of a strangeness of temper as the foundation of the apprehensions to which he alluded ; but confessed, that its ebullitions were confined to private interviews with himself. He spoke of the state of excitement under which Sir Willoughby laboured on his last return to Arden ; but confessed, that to all less interested observers than himself, the manner to which he alluded was calculated to appear but the result of his brother being at the time in particularly high spirits. He spoke

of a great inequality of humour which had latterly excited his alarm ; but confessed, that this inequality had appeared only in their private interviews. At every but, the solemnity of the judge's countenance deepened, and the jury looked at each other with an expression that seemed to say—"That won't do."

Alfred proceeded to state how both the packet of arsenic, and the torn piece of paper marked poison, had come into his possession, and his reasons for removing and securing the former ;— of his having subsequently concealed the latter about his own person, he had he said, from the state of his feelings at the time no recollection.

The judge frowned involuntarily at the vagueness of such a defence.

"People," whispered Mr. Fips to his neighbour, "are not to get off for committing murder, because they have short memories."

Alfred went on to say, that of the attempt to rinse the glass, he had a faint remembrance; that the impulse which guided his hand at the moment, must have been (as far as the thoughts of a season of sudden affliction, such as that to which he alluded, could be defined) a desire to conceal the suicide, which he feared had been committed; and that the same motive, strengthened by the frequently-expressed wishes of the deceased on the subject, had caused him

his alleged belief, that a suicide had been committed, with the reasons he had now stated to the court for wishing to suppress that supposed fact?

He had alluded to the subject in conversation with Mr. Geoffery Arden.

Here Geoffery, the sole evidence for the defence was called to the witness-box.

Did he remember any conversation of the nature referred to?

There was only one occasion on which he could call to mind Sir Alfred having made allusion to the cause of Sir Willoughby's death.

He was requested to state minutely what had passed on that occasion.

About half an hour after Sir Willoughby had expired, he had followed Sir Alfred to the bed-

chamber of the deceased, where he had found him reclining his face against the bed, apparently in a state of great mental suffering. He had made some attempts to calm his agitation, but without success; when, however, he was about to retire, Sir Alfred had looked up suddenly, and asked him if the Doctor had not said, that symptoms similar to those which had attended the dying moments of his brother, might have been occasioned by a fit of apoplexy. On being answered in the affirmative, he had added hastily, "Let it be so supposed then, and discourage all further inquiry;" he then again hid his face.

Had nothing more passed?

Nothing with which he could charge his memory.

"Bad memories are the fashion," whispered Fips, with a grin of triumph, and a grunt of approbation.

Here the prisoner's counsel cross-examined Geoffery in the closest and ablest manner, but could not draw from him that part of the conversation in which Alfred had expressed a fear of Christian burial being denied, and his mother's affliction increased, should the suicide be suspected. Thus mutilated, the evidence of the sole witness for the defence, told rather against than for the prisoner's cause, but, as there had been no third person present, the case was without remedy.

The judge asked if the prisoner had any other witnesses to call, or any thing more to

say in his own defence ; and on receiving a negative to both questions, looked disappointed. After a short pause, he commenced his charge to the jury, in the course of which he clearly and ably recapitulated the whole of the evidence.

This occupied between two and three hours, so that lights became at length necessary, though at his lordship's desk only, for the sake of referring to written notes, the imperfect remains of the daylight being sufficient for all other purposes.

The feelings of the court were now much excited ; the solemn voice of the judge had for some time been the only sound heard, while the partial illumination at such a crisis had great effect,

rendering more than ordinarily conspicuous the figure of his lordship ; his costume so strongly associated in our minds with the idea of his being the arbitrator of life and death ; his countenance, which happened to be peculiarly striking, and, in particular, the flash of his eye, which was very remarkable ; his manner, too, was impressive, the tones of his voice fine, and his diction clear and forcible ; his expositions on points of law, were luminous even to the humblest apprehensions. He told the jury, that on such points it was his business to dictate to them, and theirs to be implicitly guided by his dictum. To decide what facts were proved in evidence, and the degree of credibility due to such evidence, was, he told them,

their province ; and in deliberating on a case which had naturally excited so intense an interest in the neighbourhood, his lordship entreated that the jury would dismiss from their consideration all they might have previously heard, or even thought on the subject, and confine their whole attention to the evidence delivered in court this day.

Much, he remarked, had been often and eloquently said respecting the extreme fallibility of circumstantial evidence ; but where all the circumstances agreed, such might, in his opinion, be even more conclusive than positive testimony : for, in the one case, we deduced the fact from known facts, and therefore knew it as it were of our own knowledge ; while in the

other case, we staked our belief on the veracity of a witness or witnesses, which, though generally believed to be credible, might by possibility be otherwise. In the present instance, he was sorry to say, that the painful duty of his office compelled him to point out to their attention, that the chain of circumstantial evidence seemed more than commonly strong and connected, while every link was supported by the testimony of a host of, at least credible, and in many instances more than credible, since they were unwilling witnesses : still, it was for them to decide whether all the circumstances did agree, and whether the evidence in support of each circumstance was undoubted ; for, if they felt a doubt, it was their duty to give the prisoner the

THE HOUSE OF PRIDE.

~~most~~ It was unfortunately a
~~one~~ ~~an~~ connected with the most
~~excuse~~ ~~and~~ feelings, that it was
~~difficult~~ ~~to~~ ~~confine~~ the attention
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~~desire~~, ~~and~~ those on whom the ultimate
~~responsibility~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~wrong~~ ~~rested~~, to lay aside
~~their~~ ~~prejudices~~ ~~and~~ ~~use~~ ~~only~~ ~~their~~ ~~judgments~~.

The new charges were, he confessed, powerfully suggested by the silence of the prisoner; but he felt it was again his painful duty, to make up the truth that there was another circumstance which gave him no interest in the whole of that narrative. I need not say evidence whatever; that all arose from the unsupported assertions of the accused person. That the plan attempted to be

set up, of Sir Willoughby's insanity, was not only unsustained by evidence, but that the very contrary had been proved, on the testimony of those most intimately acquainted and closely connected with the deceased. While there was at least negative proof, that even the prisoner had never expressed such an opinion, till after it became necessary to meet the accusation against himself. And lastly, that the prosperous and peculiarly happy circumstances, in which the late Sir Willoughby Arden was placed at the time of his sudden demise, made it wholly incredible, that, being in possession of his reason, he should of his own will, have taken the poison. It had been proved in evidence, that Sir Willoughby had been in perfect health,

at and for some time after dinner—that he had supper in company with the prisoner only—that the remains of arsenic had been found in one of the glasses—that Sir Willoughby had died immediately after supper—that his death had been occasioned by arsenic—that the prisoner had attempted to rinse the glass in which the remains of arsenic were afterwards found—that a packet containing arsenic had lain on a certain morning, in a certain apartment—that the prisoner had been seen to come from that apartment alone, in the afternoon; that it was not an apartment usually inhabited or visited by the prisoner—that there was evidence the prisoner was aware the packet of arsenic lay there—that the said packet was missed

the next morning, from the said apartment—that the said packet was subsequently found in a locked escritoire of the prisoner's, to which he alone had access—that a torn piece of paper, visibly a portion of the outer cover of the said packet of arsenic, had been seen, by a witness whose respectability and credibility were beyond a doubt, fall from within the breast of the waist-coat of the prisoner—that the prisoner had resisted the opening of the body—that Dr. Harman's opinion the deceased had died by the effects of poison, would not have amounted to evidence, had the body not been opened—and finally that the defence rested entirely on the unsubstantiated assertions of the prisoner himself. As probable motives could not become

subjects of proof, though much had been said of them on the trial, he would say nothing of them here: they were all calculated to awaken feelings for, or against the prisoner; and once more, he entreated the jury to dismiss every thing but evidence from their minds, and give their verdict accordingly. He then told them distinctly what verdict it was their duty to their country to give, if they considered these facts proved, and what verdict was due to humanity, and the prisoner, if they still felt a doubt.

From the circumstance we have already mentioned, of candles being placed on the desk of the judge only, the twilight-like sort of obscurity which, by the time his lordship approached the conclusion of his charge, had stolen over the

rest of the court-house, added much to the solemn effect of this most anxious part of the proceedings. The forms of the jurymen, but dimly discerned, leaning over with painful eagerness, to catch, as it were, the very thoughts of the judge; their eyes glancing in the distant light, as they removed them, from time to time, from his countenance, to look round on each other; and when he ceased speaking, the pause that followed—and then—the verdict, which issuing as it now did, from the gloom in which the whole group was wrapped, sounded more awfully, more like the condensed, irrecoverable decision of the *judicial twelve*, than when, in the broad light of day, the foreman, though in his official capacity in fact the voice of all, still looks the individual.

The single word pronounced was—Guilty !!!

As though the whole assembly had hitherto held their breath, a sort of universal gasp was distinctly heard; and during the moment, the judge was preparing to pronounce the awful sentence of the law, a movement was observable in the part of the gallery where Lady Arden, though not visible, was known to be.

CHAPTER XI.

FROM the first our hero had, as we have already said, many friends whom no appearances, however strong, could induce to believe him guilty of the crime of which he was accused. It seemed, however, to be universally expected that he would be acquitted; and while this was the belief, there were some who said that in the face of such evidence it would be a great shame, and that when men of rank offended against the laws, they ought more especially to be made public examples of.

sense of the necessity for instant action! There was as yet, none of the quiescence of desolation; she neither lay nor even sat; she stood, yet standing wrote, and with her own hand, though in strange, large characters, unlike her own, a powerful and heart-rending appeal to royalty itself. "Time! time! at least!" was the prayer of her petition; "The day of truth may dawn," she said, firmly.

No sooner, however, was he actually condemned, than almost every one was shocked; the tide of public opinion, with but few exceptions, turned in his favour; nay, a sort of tumult arose around the court-house, and in the streets adjacent. We must, however, return to the feelings of those more immediately concerned.

The dismay of Lady Arden was as complete as it was astounding; she seemed as totally unprepared for the event, as though the possibility of a fatal result to the trial had never been anticipated. Her excitement was terrible; the pallid cheek was gone, and burning spots of crimson had succeeded, while the lustre of her eye was rendered supernatural by a restless

sense of the necessity for instant action ! There was as yet, none of the quiescence of desolation; she neither lay nor even sat ; she stood, yet standing wrote, and with her own hand, though in strange, large characters, unlike her own, a powerful and heart-rending appeal to royalty itself. "Time ! time ! at least !" was the prayer of her petition ; "The day of truth may dawn," she said, "when it is too late ! Let not my child be judicially murdered during the frightful darkness of misjudgment."

Lord Darlingford, who enjoyed the private friendship of his Majesty, set out with this letter to carry it himself to the foot of the throne ; while applications were also being made through the proper official channels.



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and without giving his name, and of course without assigning his object, got Mrs. * * * *, the famous modeller in wax, to make a mask or model of his countenance, so perfect a resemblance, both of him and of life, that there was nothing wanting to make the deception complete, but the play of feature requisite in conversation. The object of the present anxious conference was to mature the plan of how and when, with least fear of detection, our hero should, aided by this disguise, attempt to personate Mr. Edwards, and so pass out of the gaol, while he, Mr. Edwards, remained in his stead. Nothing could of course have tempted Alfred to contemplate an escape previously to his trial, to which alone he looked for the justi-

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only out of sight, but out of hearing for half an hour, or an hour, at pleasure ; and on these circumstances was every hope founded. It was also customary for Mr. Edwards on quitting prisoners, merely to bolt them in himself, and go away, without waiting the reappearance of the turnkey. This at first sight appears an irregular proceeding, and would seem to offer another facility ; it was, however, the duty of the dismissed turnkey to be in waiting at the foot of the stairs, or in some passage by the way. Alfred, indeed, in the perfect disguise proposed, might (as Mr. Edwards) pass him unobstructed, but then it became the man's further duty, on seeing the chaplain go by, to return instantly to the condemned cell,

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always before dark. During the preparations for the night, too, all persons connected with the prison were peculiarly vigilant, and on the alert. Mr. Edwards would certainly be at liberty to remain with the prisoner some time after dark if he chose ; but then, his departure would be so anxiously waited for, and the identity of the prisoner so promptly looked to by those whose business it was to make final arrangements for the night, that any attempt to escape at that hour must, to a certainty, be discovered before the prisoner could get clear of the gates.

A morning escape, therefore, before daylight, would be the least impossible, as the governor would not then be up, and probably but one or two of the turnkeys would be stirring;

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if any prior opportunity of escape could possibly be obtained it should be seized ; but a rash or unsuccessful attempt would but close the door against all future hope, and therefore be much worse than none. To arguments such as these, Lady Arden's judgment was compelled to yield, though her feelings were still strongly opposed to the miserable idea of waiting in supineness, and seeing the terrible hour approach—her son, still in the hands of his murderers ! and to think, that should the attempt at last fail when that hour arrived, they would then have a right —to——“ A right——oh, no !” she exclaimed, suddenly interrupting herself : then with vehement enthusiasm she proceeded, “ No ! not were he, in truth, the veriest of criminals—man—

weak, short-sighted, mortal man, whose own frail tenure is but a breath of air, and a few drops of blood—what right has he, with impious hands, to take away that mysterious gift of life which Heaven, for his own inscrutable ends, has given?"

And although it was strongly excited feelings on her own individual case which awakened such thoughts in Lady Arden's mind, perhaps she was right;—perhaps, if even the murderer's bloody hands were but fettered, and the law itself declared it dared not break into the sacred citadel of life;—that it dared not prematurely dissolve the mystic union betwixt body and soul, formed by heaven, and incomprehensible to mortal ken:—perhaps were there

no such thing as legal murder, sanctioning, at least, the act—reconciling the imagination to the fact of a violent death by human hands—the slayer of man would become, in the eyes of his fellow men, so utterly a monster, so thoroughly a fiend, that the crime of murder would disappear from the face of the earth.

Ere, however, such a happy age can arrive, not only must salutary laws bind, or civilization change the secret assassin ; but rapine, calling itself conquest, must be banished from the world ; and the murderer of tens of thousands, to gild a sceptre, or gem a crown, cease to be held on high, with laurel wreaths encircling his brow.

in her bosom a fierceness foreign to her habitual nature. Her attitude, her countenance implied the frantic conception, that she could afford personal protection to her son : and, unconsciously directed by the same impulse, she even stood between Alfred and the door of the prison.

Shortly, however, she was obliged to depart.

Mr. Edwards's visits were as late, as early, and as frequent as usage would permit. His ingenuity was constantly employed ; his vigilance on the ceaseless watch ; but the night of Saturday wore away, and the morning of Sunday dawned, and no opportunity of making an attempt at escape affording the slightest prospect of success, had offered. During the long, wretched day of suspense and agony nothing

the two preceding nights had offered no opportunity of accomplishing, there seemed but little chance should be compassed on this last remaining one. The evening, too, was already gone, and the lock-up completed ; nay, the night itself was on the wane ; so that now, all seemed to depend on Mr. Edwards's early visit to the prison, the one last hour before dawn, on the thus fast approaching morning of the Monday, the day fixed for the execution.

Some hours after midnight, a desperate storm of thunder, hail and rain came on. And strange it was, that the roaring elements should thus seem, as it were, to sanction the legendary belief, already mentioned, as prevalent among the ignorant persons of the neighbourhood, that all

events disastrous to a member of the Arden family were accompanied, or preceded, by terrible tempests. And, however irrational such an idea, many inhabitants of Arden, as they lay in their beds that awful night, and were suddenly awakened by the thunder, ere they slept again, shuddered involuntarily at the thought, that the old superstition was being at the very moment fulfilled.

The storm continued, and between five and six in the morning was still raging. Rejoicing in the din, the confusion, and the prospect of prolonged darkness it afforded, Mr. Edwards wended his way through its fury towards the gates of the gaol. He entered, and proceeded to the condemned cell. From his coming so

early it was supposed that he meant to pray and converse with the prisoner for some hours. In a much shorter time, however, than was expected, the porter saw him, as he supposed, approaching, with a somewhat hasty step, along the passage, to take his departure. It was Alfred : but the disguise was perfect ; and the porter had no suspicion. A moment more and he must have passed safely out—when a sudden cry was heard—“ Stop the prisoner ! Stop the prisoner ! ” And the turnkeys, running and breathless, appeared in pursuit.

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darkness was still impenetrable, continued to gaze with intense anxiety, now in the direction of the town of Arden, and now in that of the ruined castle; while Mrs. Dorothea, Lady Darlingford, and Madeline stood behind her, trembling with the combined effect of fear and cold, and shrinking from each fresh accession of the storm's fury, against which they were less defended by the panoply of a fevered mind.

If Lady Arden was at all conscious of the raving of the tempest, it was rather calculated to yield her satisfaction than otherwise, for it was highly favourable to the attempt she knew was even then being made for Alfred's escape.

The window at which she now stood, was

absence, had been watching for him at a glass door which opened from a little boudoir into the lawn; she had just admitted him, and led him up stairs by a back way. On his entering the apartment, the door was cautiously closed by Mrs. Dorothea.

Lady Arden laid her hand on his arm and looked in his face.

"He is safe," he replied, "quite safe for the present."

She sank on her knees, and some seconds were devoted to silent, fervent thanksgiving; when being still unable to articulate, she once more looked up at Mr. Cameron and motioned him to proceed.

: "The alarm was given," he continued,

the same from which, with an

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the festival for the country.

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easy to baffle pursuit. He soon joined me, when

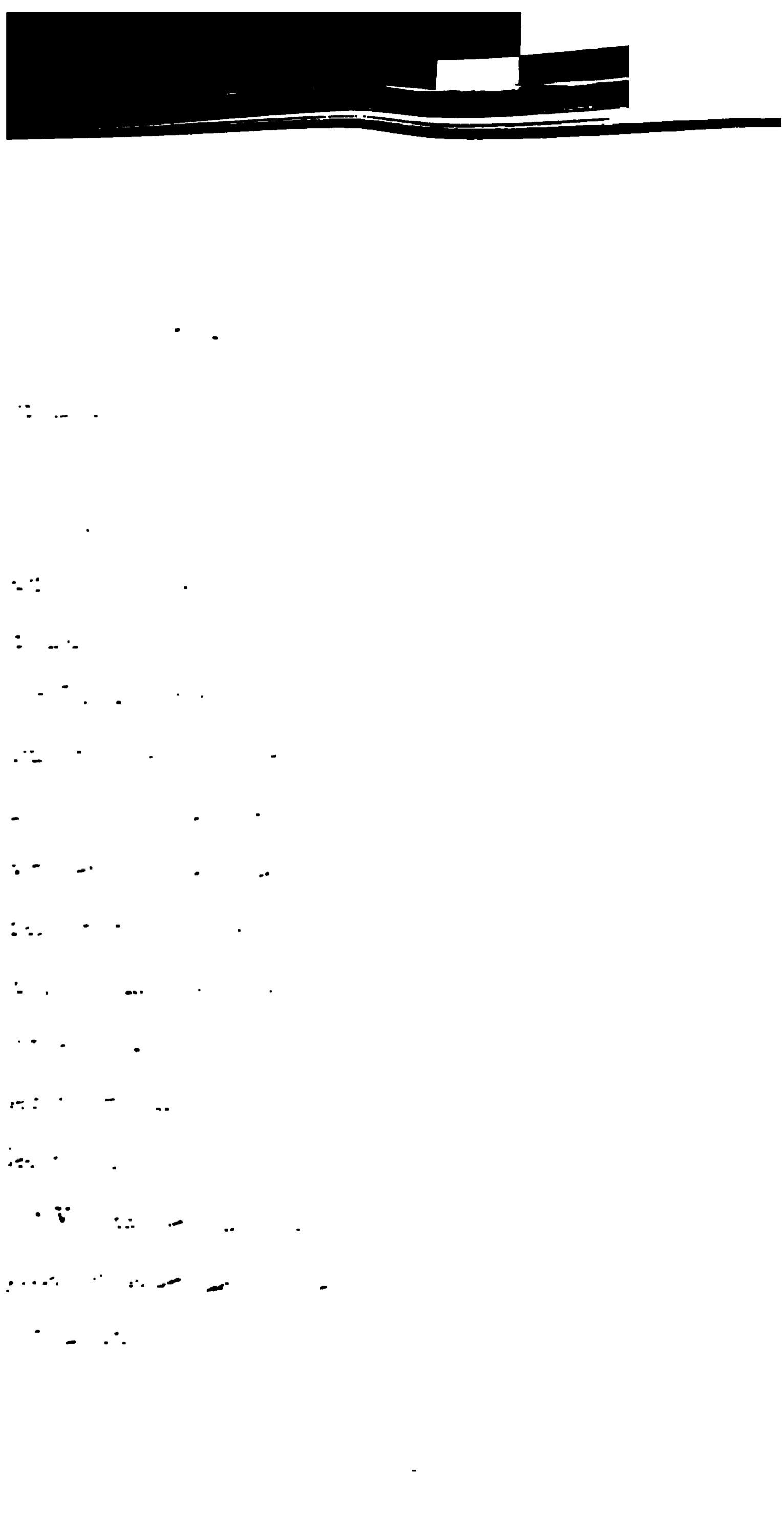
we had appointed, beneath the great beech

tree; for had he been closely followed, he would

to have climbed the trunk and concealed him

self among the branches, while I was to have

darted forward, and so led his pursuers astray.



but finding ourselves unmolested as soon as the coast was clear, we proceeded with all speed to the castle. I have lodged him safely in the eagle's nest, and am come from thence this moment."

"Thank heaven!" ejaculated from time to time, was the only interruption Mr. Cameron's account had met with, "He is so well wrapped up," he added, good naturedly endeavouring to offer what consolation he could; "and the turret is so small and the ivy so thick about it that he will be perfectly dry, and I do not think he will even feel it cold."

"We can see the exact spot from this place," exclaimed Lady Arden, rising eagerly

rendered visible ; " you mean that small projecting tower, which is called the eagle's nest, do you not ? "

" Yes, that little turret, jutting out from the side of the highest of the great towers near the top, and appearing from here not larger than a hand lantern. He must, I should think," he added, " from his present position discern the light in this window."

" Ah, my poor Alfred !" exclaimed the anxious mother. Another flash made the group of ruins and small projecting turret again for a second visible ; " if he could have been with us here !" she continued : but the loud thunder rolled, and the hurricane, as her voice issued from her lips, swept its sounds away unheard !

The next moment of comparative quiet Mr. Cameron said, in reply to the portion of the sentence he had caught—

“ It would have been unwise; for, had he been in this house, some of the servants must have known, or at least have suspected the fact; now the secret of his place of concealment is known only to ourselves.”

“ You are right—you are right! And we know that there is a fell tiger couching for the prey.”

“ Perhaps we judge him harshly,” replied Cameron. “ I think, however,” he added, “ that we have adopted altogether the very best possible course. But for the extraordinary state of the atmosphere, there should

be already some daylight, so that any attempt to quit the neighbourhood before evening again closes in would be madness. Nothing can be more complete, nor at the same time more comfortable, than the place of concealment we have selected ; a spot, too, on which you can keep a constant watch without causing any suspicion, the only accessible approach to the ruins being visible from this very window."

While he yet spoke, the grey morning began to dawn. The storm was now gradually lessening, for though the last flash of the lightning had been vivid, the last roll of the thunder had been distant, and the rain had fallen somewhere else. As the dim light increased, there-

fore, the park, which in fact bounded the whole prospect, presented a most extraordinary aspect; so dense a white, low laying, and still moving mist, covered every ordinary object, that, as far as the eye could reach the landscape resembled one vast ocean, terminated only by the horizon; while the ruined castle crowning its rocky eminence, being by its great elevation lifted above the fog, appeared alone on the surface of this seeming sea, like the solitary Ark of the Covenant, riding on the waters of the Deluge !

Such, at least, was the sublime idea it suggested to the imagination of Lady Arden, while viewing it with the grateful feelings of the moment, as the refuge of her child.

CHAPTER XIV.

We shall not enter into tedious details of the measures taken to pursue, or endeavours to discover the prisoner, nor yet of the surmises thrown out that his escape had been connived at. Neither shall we claim the sympathy of our readers, for the disappointment of those who flocked to Arden to witness the expected execution; but rather, confining our attention to the more interesting persons of our narrative, go on to say, that through the long hours of that day,

her anxious gaze follow the form, till the pathway leading to the rock on which the castle stood was left behind. Nor did she withdraw affection's eye, nor cease to be the guardian spirit of the spot, till the shadows of evening closing round, shut out the ruins from her view.

Alfred had now, she knew, commenced his journey. Her devoted affection would have led her to accompany her son, but such a step would hamper his flight, and endanger his safety. Even a farewell interview was not to be thought of.

In utter desolation of spirit, therefore, our unhappy hero, even at the moment we are describing, rapidly descended the height on

could not himself have defined. For, since his sentence had been pronounced, notwithstanding the anxious efforts still making in his behalf, he had been strenuously preparing his mind for the most fatal issue, and, with the assistance of the pious Mr. Edwards, endeavouring to wean his affections from things below and to centre all his hopes in heaven. However little understood such feelings may be by those who are engaged in the busy whirl of terrestrial concerns, to those who have lately stood on the brink of the grave, they possess an awful reality not soon to be forgotten.

Compared with views of peace, and rest, and hope so obtained, there was, as a counterpoise to the mere instinct of self preservation, a strong

England till every effort had been made to obtain the reprieve of her son ; but, if all failed, to join him under a feigned name at Geneva, the place at which they had appointed to meet ; and become, for the remainder of her sojourn upon earth, the kind companion and solace of his wanderings.

Two of her daughters were already married ; Mr. Cameron had generously declared his unaltered determination to become the husband of Madeline ; Lady Arden had that morning consigned to the grave the remains of poor Wiloughby ; Alfred alone, therefore, now claimed all her care, all her tenderness, all the consolation her maternal affection could bestow.

How the affair would have concluded had not

CHAPTER XV.

How our hero made his way to, and through France, he never afterwards could clearly call to mind.

Every perception was turned inward; while some mysterious spell seemed endued with the power of compelling his thoughts to go again and again the torturing round of remembrances, every one equally fraught with wretchedness. The miserable end of poor Willoughby—never could that heartrending scene be erased from

waterfalls, its forests of beech and pine. At length the magnificent lake itself opened to his view; stretching from Geneva to Chillon, and reflecting, as in an immense mirror, the surrounding Alps with their fleecy region of eternal snows, their glacier cliffs, glittering in the sunbeams, their dark blue zone of wood, rock, precipice, and torrent; and their smiling fertile base. He completed the winding descent of the Jura, commanding the whole way to the very verge of the lake, a full view of the fairy scenery, the fertile slopes, the glowing vineyards, the cornfields, orchards, gardens, towns, villages and villas; the wooded brows, tranquil vales, and sparkling streams, of the enchanting Pays de Vaud; yet he felt no pleasurable sen-

The Rhone flowed with a rapid pace beneath the very street and house in which he had taken up his abode for the night. The pleasing murmur of its waters became to his dreaming fancy the tumult of the congregated multitude, around the foot of the scaffold, on which, with that extraordinary certitude which sometimes accompanies the visions of disordered slumber, he thought he was about to suffer an ignominious death.

The agony of the moment awoke him, and he slept no more. But he felt a stronger and more grateful sense than he had hitherto done, of the blessing of having been preserved from such a fate; and even hope, under the healing influence of a thankful spirit, in some sort revived. The

foul blot might be yet removed ; he might yet be restored to the love and respect of all good men ; he might yet, though he could never more know happiness himself, cease to be a source of misery to the best of parents.

Fearful, that among the many English at Geneva, there might be some to whom he was personally known, he remained in the house the whole of the following day. In the evening, however, tempted by the balmy air, the weather being unusually fine for the season, he determined to go on the lake ; a situation, in which he should of course be less liable than on shore to meeting other persons near enough for recognition.

He did so accordingly. The sun had, a

short time since, sunk behind the Jura, while a lingering beam still crowned, as with a regal circlet, the stately brows of that monarch of the scene, Mont Blanc. The hour was calm and beautiful ; the shores were fairy land ; the lake a sea of gold ; while its shining surface was dotted with numerous vessels of every description, gliding along so smoothly, that but for the changes which gradually became apparent in their relative positions, they might have seemed to have stood still.

One of these in particular, with a spell-like power, drew the attention of our hero, possibly from unconscious sympathy with human misery, as it seemed to be in some sort the scene of sorrow or of suffering, for beneath an awning, a portion of the curtains of which were drawn

whose practice he, by the way, by no means seemed to approve, that she was brought out thus on the lake at all hours, and almost all weathers, more, 'tis to be feared, to give notoriety to the doctor than health to the patient.

While he was speaking, the boat which contained the invalid began to come towards them, on its way to the place of landing. At the same moment a slight breeze arose, and lifting the curtains of the awning on both sides simultaneously, kept them straight out, with a gently fanning movement, like the extended wings of some gigantic bird. Its appearance thus remarkable, its progress barely perceptible, it continued drawing nearer and nearer while the narrator went on, winding up his story by saying,

the report was, that this beautiful lady had two suitors in her own country, who were brothers; and that the one had murdered the other for jealousy, but his crime being discovered, he had been brought to trial, and executed: so that the poor young lady might well be disconsolate, having thus lost both her lovers. By this time the approaching boat had come so close, that in passing, it slightly grazed that in which our hero sat.

Alfred's gaze had for some time been intense; his cheek now blanched; unconsciously he grasped the arm of the boatman.

Pale, beautiful, to all appearance lifeless, the form which lay beneath the uplifted awning in the passing boat was that of Caroline. The

eyes were closed, but the faultless features, in their angel-like expression, were still unchanged, presenting a model of perfect loveliness reposing in the sleep of death: while the silent attendants, with their common-place, though solemn visages, looked like the rough stone figures of mourning mutes coarsely carved around some Parian marble monument.

either not chanced to meet with, or at least not happened to read with any degree of attention, an English newspaper. One, however, was laid on their breakfast table the morning after their arrival at Geneva ; it was that which contained a summary of Alfred's trial, conviction, and condemnation to an ignominious death, for the wilful murder of his brother. From the circumstances of Lady Palliser being out of England, on the constant move, and consequently not associating with any one, her ladyship had not heard before even of such an accusation having been brought against our hero, yet she glanced over the account of the terrific affair with a countenance perfectly unmoved ; and when she had finished the statements,

merely handed the paper across the table to Caroline saying, in the most careless tone imaginable,

“It was very fortunate that you were not married to either of them.”

Caroline, wondering what her mother could mean, took the paper in silence, and began to read the part indicated by the manner of folding. Lady Palliser sipped her coffee without even a look of inquiry towards her daughter; but had there been any one present to have noted the emotions marked on the countenance of Caroline, they would have seen first, a faint glow as the names met her sight; then the gradual retiring of the same; then the unconscious parting of the lips

and holding of the breath; next a quickened respiration, a flickering colour, and a countenance full of indignant expression.

Soon after this profound attention seemed to still every pulse, for the paper which before had visibly vibrated with each throb of the heart, no longer stirred, while every vestige of the lines of life retired even from the lips: the eyes alone moved, as eagerly they traced, from margin to margin, line after line. Suddenly a rush of crimson covered the face and neck, a piercing cry escaped the lips, and Caroline fell senseless to the floor, having become again pale as a corpse.

It was some hours before she showed any

returning signs of life, and when she again opened her eyes, it was evident, from their piteous expression, that consciousness, whether of woe or weal was gone.

Subsequently, however, though she still noticed no other object, she manifested such strong symptoms of terror at the approach of Lady Palliser, that the medical attendant thought fit to recommend her ladyship not to enter the apartment.

Lady Palliser, from whom patient attendance on sickness or suffering was not at any rate much to be expected, soon began to get exceedingly tired of the whole affair. She was also provoked that her daughter's name should, however blamelessly, be implicated with that

of a family on whom such disgrace had fallen; for though Alfred's escape was by this time known, the stigma was still the same; he was still under sentence of death—he was still believed to be a murderer. Caroline's sudden illness too had made matters worse; for its supposed cause had got abroad, and having spread from the English to the natives, became the universal topic of conversation with high and low. That this would be still more the case in England her ladyship was well aware; she determined therefore not to return thither till the business should be in a great measure forgotten; in the mean time to proceed on her tour, leaving her daughter, who was unable to travel,

to refrain from seeing his patient, she appeared to consider herself at liberty to follow her own devices.

peled by an uncontrollable impulse, and too much agitated to think of forms, he entered the hall with the servants, of whom he made some incoherent inquiries. They seemed scarcely to comprehend him. A person passed hastily in almost at the moment and entered a sitting-room which opened into the hall, and into which the couch with the invalid had just been carried.

"It is the doctor, sir," said a servant, with a puzzled air, which seemed to infer, he can probably answer you better than I can.

Alfred followed eagerly to the door of the room, and stood there some seconds in breathless anxiety. It opened—the *soi-disant* doctor was coming out, but drew back, as it were, to

make way for our hero ; who, from his evident and pitiable agitation, and his eager inquiries, he seemed to take for granted, was some one of the lady's near relations arrived at last, and of course entitled to enter the apartment of the invalid. Laying apparently asleep on a sofa visible from the door, Alfred could now discern Caroline : yet, though at the time in no state of mind for reflection, he so far felt himself unauthorized in his intrusion as to give an air of hesitation to his manner.

" You can come in, sir," said the doctor, " there is no danger, I am sorry to say," he added with pompous solemnity, " of waking the patient."

On hearing these alarming words, Alfred

rushed to the side of the couch in so wild a manner, that the doctor, quite aghast, followed, and laying his hand on his arm, said, " You mistake me, sir : there is no reason to expect immediate dissolution ; my meaning was, that you need not be apprehensive of interrupting the slumbers of the patient ; her state being unhappily, not natural sleep, but a species of trance, becoming, I feel it, notwithstanding, my painful duty to say from its prolonged duration and the daily diminution of bodily strength, every hour more and more hopeless. From, in fact, the first moment of her sudden seizure up to the present time, she has not shed one tear, spoken one word ; nor, as we have reason to believe, though in this constant state of apparent

unconsciousness, ever actually slept; for, at any startling or unusual sound, her eyes have been observed to open, though but for a second.

While the doctor, who was fond of hearing himself talk, had been thus holding forth, Alfred had stood gazing on the pale unconscious sufferer, in an agony of grief and compassion.

Pity is itself a gentle, an endearing sentiment; but when claimed by a being we already love, who shall paint the going forth of the whole soul, in the blended sympathy! If there is an earthly feeling pure from self, worthy of heaven, it is this! Had Alfred encountered Caroline in health, amid scenes of plea-

sure and of gaiety, himself free from the disgrace and ruin which now attached to him; nay, with a knowledge that her seeming want of truth had been but obedience to the tyrannical commands of a parent; that her heart was still his; that, in short, every obstacle to their union was removed by the death of poor Willoughby;— how soon, in such a case, he might have been able to have separated thoughts of her and of happiness from the heart-rending remembrance of his brother; at what distant period of time he could, in short, have sought a paradise on the very shore where that brother had become a wreck, it is impossible to say. But when instead of all this, her idea was presented to his mind under circumstances so new, so ter-

rible, so far removed from selfish joy, which, when mingled with thoughts of Willoughby, would have seemed almost a sacrilege; then it was that an overwhelming interest in her fate took possession of his whole soul unresisted, consisting of fears, not of hopes; and that soul full of misery, was almost paralysed by the memory and presence of sorrow. He continued to gaze, till a sense of the most appalling dread, despite the assurance of the doctor that there was no immediate danger, crept over his heart, so much did the perfect stillness of the lovely features resemble that of death. His terror momentarily increased—he bent—he knelt—he listened in breathless anguish, till the throbbing of his own pulses might have been heard, but he

could catch no sound of respiration. He looked up with a sort of despairing yet questioning expression in the doctor's face.

"I by no means," said the authority so appealed to, "apprehend, as I have already stated, any immediate danger. This species of trance has continued without intermission, ever since the first rash communication of the fatal intelligence." Then, fond of hearing himself talk, and possibly believing that he spoke to a near relative, acquainted of course with all the circumstances, he continued to exhibit his powers of oratory thus :

"The shock was, I fear, altogether too much for any sensitive mind ; what with the abrupt mode of communication, and the manner of

the gentleman's death, so terrible—murdered they say, by his own twin brother!"

"No, sir!" exclaimed Alfred, starting up with sudden fierceness, and grasping the doctor's arm, "he was not murdered by his brother; and that," he added, with an altered tone and manner, clasping his hands, and raising his eyes to heaven, "when her spirit awakes in the realms of the blessed it will know."

The conversation up to this point had been conducted in the mysterious whispers of a sick room, but Alfred's voice, from excess of excitement, in the last sentence unconsciously assumed its natural key. As he concluded his apostrophy to Heaven, his eyes, which had been uplifted in the fervour of devotional feeling

fell again on Caroline. Her's were wide open, and fixed on him, with an almost wild expression of terror and bewilderment !

'In a moment more, the crimson rush had, for a second, crossed her brow; the piercing cry escaped her lips, and she had fallen again into that totally inanimate state, which had characterised her first seizure, and distinguished it from the sleep-like trance in which she had subsequently lain.

All was instant confusion and dismay. Alfred, almost wild with terror, raised the drooping head which had slid from the pillow, supported the fair cheek against his bosom ; and chafed, now the temples, now the hands, mechanically, endeavouring to obey the directions of the

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He knew himself no second much
better, and surprised them by surprise; he
had all the marks of restored animation he
could then exhibit in him. It length he began
to give up serious music. F. Allix's tragic
admonitions, half present, half forever, as
though the incendiary winds could reverse the
course of time, he repented repeatedly, and
with passion that fit was over. "There
is no now," he said. "The strength to
only those had been at the time of the first
attack."

3 munition signs followed: 1st, as with one

consent, discontinued their efforts. The doctor folded his arms. The very attendants stood for a considerable time quite motionless.

Alfred was kneeling beside the couch, in the attitude he had taken, while striving to render assistance to her, who was now no more. At length the nurses, anxious in their officious zeal to perform the duties they considered their province, drew near, removed the head of Caroline from his supporting shoulder, and laid it on the centre of the pillow, then withdrew the hand he still grasped in his, and arranging the delicate fingers, placed it by her side; while the doctor approaching, raised our hero, and led him from the room, attempting, as he did so, the usual commonplaces of conversa-

time: it was an event which had been expected for some time. There was so little hope of ultimate recovery, that it might be considered a happy release; for even had her life been preserved, her faculties could never have been restored.

As for our hero, he heard him not; all his thoughts, discoloured and distorted by late events, were desperate. "It was well," he inwardly ejaculated, "yes, it was well—life was misery—death a refuge—why should any one desire to live!"

The doctor, the whale, led Alfred through the hall, assisted him into his (the doctor's) carriage, which stood at the door, and begged to know whether he desired to be driven

The question had to be repeated more than once before a murmur, from which something like the address was at length collected, could be drawn from Alfred.

asked himself. Then, with indescribable agony, he recalled the bewildered terror of those dear eyes during the single moment they had met his. How short was the period which had since elapsed ; she was then in life—was it possible ! could she be already gone for ever ? A lingering feeling, in some sort allied to hope, though altogether irrational, still struggled with his despair. It is after waiting in vain, as it were, for a reprieve from fate, that sorrow for the dead seems gradually to reach its climax. It is not in the first hour of bereavement that we can comprehend our wretchedness ; so difficult is it to believe, that in a few short moments, the great, the awful change, has taken place and eternity for a fellow-mortal, who trod the

path of earth with us but now, commenced. Then would he view, with stern despair, the mysterious union, by which his own fate, the fate of poor Willoughby, and that of Caroline, seemed linked together in misery.

"But she is now at rest," he would add, and after dwelling for a time on this idea, gentler emotions would arise; and he would strain his mental vision to behold the shadowy regions of that "bourn whence no traveller returns," as though tenderness thus sought for some locality in which to picture to itself the cherished image of the being beloved.

Night passed away, and morning came, but its light brought with it the unsufferable thought, that even now the busy preparations of the

living, to rid themselves of the dead, were in all probability being commenced!—Once more—yes, once more, he must behold her! And then he would think of his poor mother, and patiently await his own release. As he formed this resolve, he was crossing his apartment, to descend into the street and hasten back to the villa, when the door flew open and Lady Arden entered.

"Alfred! my son," she exclaimed, "you are justified!" unable to articulate further, she wept passionately, but her tears flowed over a countenance radiant with joy.

As the words, "you are justified," sounded in the ear of Alfred, relief from ignominy swelled his heart with a proud and worthy satisfaction,

his still and saddened features; "this misery has been all occasioned by the tyranny of Lady Palliser;—she whom you both loved has ever been, and is still faithful to you.—She confided in poor Willoughby at the last, and entreated him to shelter her from the anger of her mother, by withdrawing his addresses. He obeyed her wish—but—his mind lost its balance in the effort. There is hope then—surely there is hope—that Heaven will deal mercifully with him who had not reason for his guide when he sinned."

Alfred looked in her face while she spoke. When she ceased, his lips attempted to move but no sound proceeded from them. Every power, mental and physical, had been strained

beyond frail Nature's capability of endurance.

His head rested, and he sunk on a sofa in
nearly a swooning state.

At this moment the doctor most opportunely
entered.

CHAPTER XIX.

While the Doctor is exerting his skill in the endeavour to revive our hero, we shall go back and give some account of the events which led to the fortunate result proclaimed by Lady Arden on her entrance.

We have already mentioned that at an early hour the morning after Alfred quitted his place of concealment in the ruins, the long-delayed funeral of Willoughby took place;

immediately after which the family set out for London.

Geoffery, though he knew himself to be a suspected and unwelcome guest, yet had thought it necessary, for appearance sake, to attend. He had done so, and spent some hours subsequently at Fips's, awaiting the departure of Lady Arden and suite from the mansion, upon which it was his intention to take immediately formal possession of a place of which he had so long desired to be the master. The last of the carriages containing the family party had passed about an hour, when Geoffery mounted his horse and was riding through the principal street of Arden on his way to the park, on the adjacent woods of which he was

so much engaged looking with exulting *pride*, that he did not perceive a waggon laden with household furniture which happened to be passing, till it came so near that to avoid it he was obliged to ride close to the foot-path.

There chanced to be advancing at the moment, along the said foot-path, a decrepid old man, a sort of village miser ; who, though suspected of possessing secret hoards, lived alone in a hovel—denied himself the necessities of life—and looked like a beggar. This man had enjoyed for many years, as a sort of privilege, the almost exclusive sale, at the moderate charge, as he expressed it, of one halfpenny each, of all murders, trials, last dying speeches, ballads, valentines, &c. &c. &c.

operations. He had just vociferated, " Interesting account, &c. &c." and at the precise moment that Geoffery, in making way for the waggon rode close to the footpath, was in the act of raising his arm to display on high his large-lettered merchandize, when his hand coming in contact with the nose of Geoffery's horse the glaring white appearance, and sudden rustling noise of the unfurled paper so startled the animal, that he backed, plunged, and reared up against the waggon, entangling Geoffery amongst the legs and arms of the tables and chairs with which it was heaped, and which, lifting him from his saddle, let him down so close to one of the wheels, that it went over his head and crushed it to atoms. He

was taken up and carried into an adjacent public house, of course quite dead ; while almost every one who had been in the street at the time of the accident, crowded immediately into the common room where he was laid.

It so happened that the master of the house had once incurred very ugly suspicions respecting picking of pockets ; this was a point therefore on which he was now particularly jealous of his honour. When the spectators therefore had satisfied themselves as to the nature and extent of the injuries received by the deceased, and were about to disperse, mine host uplifted his voice, and requested that some one would remain to examine the contents of the gentle-

man's pockets, that his house might come to no discredit in the business.

Accordingly, two persons consented to do so, one an apothecary, who had been called in to pronounce whether or not a person who had been guillotined by a waggon wheel, were quite dead; the other, Mr. Danvers, High Sheriff for the county. He had attended the funeral, and was passing through the town on his way home. He was the warm friend of Lady Arden, and felt a strong persuasion of Alfred's innocence.

The money in Geoffery's purse was counted, and a pocket-book found which was opened, to ascertain whether it contained bank-notes; Here Mr. Danvers perceived a letter, the ad-

dress and memoranda on the outer fold of which rivetted his whole attention. They were in the late Sir Willoughby Arden's handwriting, and ran thus—"To my dear brother, Alfred Arden, containing my dying requests to him, together with my reasons for having resolved to put a period to my existence."

It was very evident that this letter, though open, had never reached Sir Alfred's hands, or it must have been brought forward on the trial; there seemed therefore to be no doubt that Geoffery Arden, however it had come into his possession, had suppressed it with the most diabolical intentions. To hasten therefore immediately with the precious document, in pursuit of Lady Arden, and lay the affair in due

form before the Secretary of State for the Home Department, seemed to be the obvious course, and was accordingly adopted by Mr. Danvers with all possible speed.

obtained, that poison had been taken, and would, therefore, on opening the body be found, suggested to Geoffery's evil mind the first faint glimpses of the diabolical scheme which so many after circumstances so unexpectedly favoured. Had there been a fire in his apartment that night, he would for security have certainly burnt the packet; but it fortunately happened that there was not, and so agitated and occupied was his mind in the contemplation of the very possibility of compassing at once the hideous crime and enormous gain, which he was balancing one against the other, that the idea of destroying the dangerous document by means of his candle never once occurred to him. Accordingly, when he had

supposed to have hitherto merely lain unnoticed, both clear himself of all suspicion and secure his bequest; for though this bequest was not left in a binding form, he had no doubt that Alfred would religiously make it good. No place, however, seemed safe enough for keeping this important document but about his own person, and accordingly he so disposed of it; which serves to account for its being found in the manner described.

The packet itself presented a melancholy picture of poor Willoughby's disordered state of mind, brought down somewhat in the form of a journal, and with a kind of method mingled with its wildness to the very evening of his death. In proof of the strange blending of

and never think of him who could so well be spared—who never should have been born—who seemed to have been called into existence but to stand in the way of others, and be himself wretched !

“ Yet I know that you will grieve for me, Alfred,” it continued, “ and the thought of how much you will grieve sometimes makes me shrink from seeking the rest I long for. But it will be for a time only, and then you too will be happy. Yes, you must be happy, Alfred ! ”

Caroline’s letter was inclosed in the packet, and some comments made, in a strain of forced, unnatural calmness, on Lady Palliser’s cruel policy. While the whole, which seemed to have been written at many different periods,

was but a melancholy vehicle for joyful intelligence to Lady Arden. In her mind, however, at such a moment, there was room but for one idea—Alfred was safe! Even her pride in him, which had mingled with despair, was forgotten in tenderness.

She left all the care of his public justification, with the necessary forms for his restoration to his right, in the hands of Mr. Danvers and Lord Darlingford; and though, as a precaution lest Alfred should lose one moment of the relief of mind such intelligence was calculated to bestow, she had dispatched, at the first instant, an express, bearing in her own writing the three words, "You are justified." Nevertheless she had followed her own messenger with so

much expedition, that she overtook him at the gates of Geneva, awaiting their being opened; and thus became, as we have seen, the first to announce to her exiled son the happy change which had taken place in his circumstances.

While her ladyship was thus occupied, the townspeople of Arden, impatient to display the returning tide of their affection and respect towards their young landlord, were illuminating every pane of glass they possessed, and lighting bonfires on every rising ground in the neighbourhood, in honour of his acquittal; while at the same time their indignation against Geoffery knew no bounds. His motive in suppressing and concealing Alfie's letter spoke for itself; and so strong was the general feeling of abhor-

rence which it excited, that the night after he was buried, his body was disinterred by the mob, and placed on a gibbet on the road-side, between Arden and Arden Park. His coadjutor, too, Mr. Fips, was blamed even more than he deserved, if that indeed were possible : that is to say, he was universally believed to have been a party to the suppression of Willoughby's packet ; a belief engendered, and, in a great measure justified, by his being Geoffery's right-hand man on all occasions, and still more by the active part he had taken previously to and on the trial, as well as by his own general villany of character.

Accordingly, during the illuminations for Alfred's acquittal, the mob began by smashing

every window in Fips's house; and hatred of Gripe, as he was called, being a common cause, those who had commenced the attack were soon joined by so many who had a personal feeling of revenge, founded on a lively remembrance of ruin entailed on themselves and their families by his means, that before morning they literally left not one stone, or rather one brick, upon another of Fips's dwelling; while himself and his daughter narrowly escaped with their lives, without being able to carry with them a single paper, or a vestige of property of any kind. What was of value found plenty of customers, who thought it no robbery to take back a little of their own; and as to the parchments, &c., a sagacious ringleader proposed that

they should all be emptied out at the foot of the market cross ; that so, when there was light in the morning, every one might come and choose his own. Thus did many a man get back his documents without being compelled to pay the unjust and enormous bill for which they were held as security ; whilst every thing in the shape of bill, book, or account standing against any individual, was carefully consigned to the flames. All the town, in short, felt it more or less a blessing that the hornet's nest had been destroyed. As to the authorities, they had themselves, some of them, felt the gripe of Mr. Fips in their day : after, therefore, every step *they* judged proper was duly taken to discover who had been the perpetrators of the late

CHAPTER XXI.

It was evening; a cheerful mixture of twilight and firelight filled the apartment in which our hero lay, slowly recovering from a brain fever of many weeks duration.

He had been long delirious, and as yet had not recognised the friends who were around him, or been conscious of any event which had occurred since the morning on which Lady Arden had arrived at Geneva. But his crisis was now past, and much was expected from the peaceful and profound sleep he had enjoyed for nearly

the whole, both of the last night and of the last day. A group of itinerant musicians had stopped beneath his window, and were performing some simple strain, which, though possibly conducive to his awaking just at that moment, fell on his half conscious ear with indescribable sweetness. Gradually his eyes began to open: at first but in an imperceptible degree; yet, through the still veiling lashes he now saw confusedly, visions, as of angels, hovering around his pillow. While a countenance which bent over his, watching, as it were, his slumbers, seemed to grow each moment brighter and brighter, till, for one second, he distinctly beheld (or did he dream), the face of Caroline! It disappeared instantly, and was succeeded by that of his sister Madeline;

but the shadow of a form glided round the curtain which the eye of Alfred anxiously followed.

It was Caroline ; she had gone to announce to Lady Arden Alfred's awaking.

Lady Arden had been also ill herself, and was not yet able to bear much fatigue : she had, therefore, lain down while Caroline and Madeline cheered each other's watch in the sick chamber. The music in the street had alarmed our youthful nursetenders, lest it should awake their charge : they had raised their taper fingers, and thus asked each other by signal, whether they should send to have it stopped ; while, as a preliminary movement, Caroline had glided to the bedside to note its effect upon the sleeper. She had stood a few seconds, marking as well

not admit of any very violent paroxysm of feeling. His recollections of the past too, were as yet but confused ; so that the overpowering intelligence that Caroline was still living—was near him—was kindly attending him in sickness, came not upon him at once in its full force, but grew with his growing perceptions.

"Where is she gone, Madeline?" he at length breathed, in a scarcely audible whisper.

"Only to my mother's room," replied Madeline, in accents scarcely louder.

"And tell me where we are?" he added, after another pause.

"At Geneva, dearest Alfred. But you must not speak."

"At Geneva!" he repeated, then lay still a

tained in broken accents, "the desire—to know—how—it has all happened—will hurt me more—than listening to your—sweet—voice.—So tell me all—and then—I will be composed."

Madeleine, judging that of the two it was better he should listen to her than permit in endeavouring to speak himself, replied in the softest of whispers, shading the light of the fire from his face :

" Why, when my mother saw that she had both you and Caroline to nurse, she wrote to us to come here. But, by the time we came, we found dear Caroline so much recovered, that she was nursing both you and my mother, who had then become ill herself from fatigue. But she is now quite well again," she added, seeing

Alfred look around. "And she has written to Lady Palliser, and obtained her permission for Caroline to stay with us while we remain abroad, that she may travel home with our party. And now, indeed, I will not speak another word, so you must lay still."

Here the appearance of Lady Arden, and Aunt Dorothea, and soon after of the doctor, relieved Madeline from the difficult task of keeping her refractory patient in order.

CHAPTER XXII.

FROM day to day, as Alfred became stronger and less unfit for prolonged conversation, his kind parent had detailed to him all the interesting particulars attendant on the illness and recovery of our heroine.

Her deep swoon had not, either at the first or second time of seizure, been a mere common faint; but had, on both occasions, more especially the last, partaken of the nature of those trances in which persons have been known to

present for days so completely the appearance of death, as to have been carried by grieving relations to the grave; yet to have subsequently recovered, and lived for many years. Whether a more skilful doctor might, in Caroline's case, have detected the difference, we cannot pretend to say.

Soon after Alfred had been led away from what he then believed to be the chamber of death, the doctor had also taken his departure. When, however, he returned at an early hour in the morning, to give some necessary orders preparatory to the funeral, he was, to his great surprise, met on the steps by a messenger, who was just coming out to inform him that the patient had exhibited signs of returning life.

He entered the sick chamber, administered restoratives, &c., &c., and in a short time had the satisfaction of seeing Caroline open her eyes while, instead of closing them again almost instantly, as on former occasions, she now, though too feeble to move her head on the pillow, looked all round the apartment with evident anxiety, then fixed her gaze on the door, as if watching for some expected sight or sound.

It was to announce the pleasing intelligence of the revival of his patient, that the doctor entered Alfred's apartment at the critical juncture described.

His communications ultimately led to Lady Arden giving to Caroline every moment and

every thought she could spare from Alfred. While the kind attentions of such a friend, with the explanations which of course followed, supplied at once the soothings of considerate regard and the motive to live; and thus, with the assistance of some rational medical adviser, called in by Lady Arden, wrought a recovery which, to those unacquainted with the particulars, seemed almost miraculous.

But though Caroline, from the time of the first seizure caused by the communication of the fatal intelligence, up to that of the second, occasioned by the unexpected apparition of Alfred, had lain in a state supposed to border on insensibility; her actual state, during the period alluded to, had been rather that passive

of despair, characteristic of a being so gentle by nature, so friendless by circumstances, that her mind, overwhelmed and unsupported, was incapable of an effort, and had sought a sort of refuge from the agony of carrying its burden of wretchedness through the ordinary round of life in this total inaction, this entire quiescence, this living death, while awaiting that actual dissolution, which, though she had not the wilfulness nor the wickedness to accelerate, she hoped would soon arrive. She spoke not, wept not, and the light of day being oppressive to her broken spirit, opened not her eyes, except when some sudden or startling sound caused the instinctive movement. At such times they met no object to awaken kindly associations, or call

the affections back to life; the faces they beheld around were those of strangers, the very nurses and servants in attendance having been hired for this occasion, Lady Palliser having taken with her those she had brought from England. Poor Caroline's eyes, therefore, languidly closed again without noticing any object.

The general impression on the minds of the persons by whom Caroline was surrounded was, that the shock her mind had received was occasioned by the intelligence that the gentleman to whom she was engaged to be married had been murdered. The subsequent accounts, therefore, of the escape of the murderer, it never accrued to them that it could be any consolation to her

to be informed of. On the contrary, they would have judged it highly imprudent to have forced any circumstances connected with the fatal subject on her consideration. Had there been an affectionate or intimate friend in attendance they might have better understood the feelings of the sufferer. But none such was near. Poor Caroline, therefore, up to the moment that the suddenly-elevated voice of Alfred caused her to open her eyes, and beheld him standing beside her couch, remained under the frightful impression (though in her own heart confident of his innocence), that he had suffered an ignominious death for the murder of his brother.

From total want of energy she sometimes waved

from her, and, at other times took no notice of, any food presented to her; but being too meekly submissive in her nature, for the wilful resolve of committing suicide by abstinence, she did not offer any resistance to the efforts of the nurses to preserve life by administering, from time to time, a spoonful of liquid-jelly, whey, or gruel.

Between mental suffering, therefore, and want of proper sustenance, her physical strength was thus, from day to day, gradually giving way. As for our friend the doctor, he was in too great request to run in and run out again; had making discoveries, therefore, been his fort, which it was not, he could not have spared the time: so that poor Caroline, but for Alfred's

visit to Geneva, might have faded away from apparent into real death, ere any chance had conveyed to her the escape, and finally the acquittal of our hero.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ALFRED's recovery after this period was rapid, which enabled Lady Arden to remove shortly to a beautiful villa, situated on the borders of the lake, amid the romantic enchantments of the Pays de Vaud ; and commanding, on the opposite banks, the bold and majestic scenery of the Savoy mountains, with their snow-clad tops and stupendous cliffs, thousands of perpendicular feet in height.

It was in this spot, itself an earthly paradise,

that our gentle heroine enjoyed the first really happy days she had ever known. No longer the solitary unloved object of her mother's capricious tyranny, she seemed to be already one of the kind and united family, in the bosom of which she had thus found a shelter,—already to form the very centre of a little circle of affectionate friends. For though, in the exciting moment of necessity, poor Caroline had been able to render some assistance to others, at least had been willing to think so, she was not yet strong herself; so that, as Alfred got quite well, she became the especial object of the care and indulgence of all. The attentions, the anxieties, the precautions for her health and comfort, of not only Lady Arden, but also of kind Mrs. Do-

rethea, were truly parental; while Madeline's companionship supplied to her that dear, familiar tie, she had never known before—that of a sister: and Alfred was brother, lover, friend—all in one. In every ramble his arm was her support; in every excursion, he it was who led the mule, or shared the seat, whatever vehicle she occupied afforded; and sweet was the murmur of the waterfal, the music of his voice commended; and beautiful the beauty in the landscape, towards which a beam from his eye led the responsive light of hers.

Sometimes, on calm and lovely evenings, our little party would indulge in the quiet luxury of taking their seats in a pleasure boat, which formed a part of their present establishment;

and sailing about for hours on the smooth and shining surface of the lake ; while the stupendous mountains that rose around, like insuperable barriers against the world without, and the cloudless sky that canopied the whole, gave to feelings which were, in fact, those of the highest excitement, induced by the late relief from wretchedness, a sense of repose, a semblance of stability, calculated to add to present enjoyment the too flattering belief, that it could last for ever.

Among scenes such as these, many happy months glided away ; yet such was the delicate respect and mournful tenderness with which poor Willoughby was remembered, by both Alfred and Caroline, that the mention of love,

in express terms, seemed to be, as by mutual consent, delayed. Alfred, indeed, would sometimes use, in speaking of futurity, the *we*—that promissory note of affianced love—and feel an indescribable thrill of delight in marking the conscious blush which his inadvertence was sure to excite on Caroline's fair cheek. Nor was the tender, the endearing thought, ever for a moment absent from his mind, that it was her secret attachment to him, the belief of his accusation, his terrible death, which had brought her, in the early morning of her days, to the dark portal of the tomb.

It was in moments of perfect calm, such as we have been describing, when either sailing on the smooth lake, or strolling with Mrs. Do-

rothea along its lovely margin, while the young people were occupied with each other, that Lady Arden would shudder involuntarily, when in imagination she contemplated, as from an immeasurable height, the frightful abyss of wretchedness into which she had been plunged so lately; and the horrors of which, from their stunning effect at the time, already seemed shadowy and indistinct, like the remembrance of some terrific dream!

" Yet such things have been," she would say, turning suddenly to Mrs. Dorothea, " and here I am, still in being ! Would it not appear, that when the causes of suffering become extreme, confusion of spirit is sent in mercy to the succour of mortal weakness ; as though such agony, as

the soul can conceive when in full possession of its powers, were reserved to be the awful portion of the impenitent sinner after judgment!

In our present state we know nothing perfectly
—not even misery!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

WE have hitherto neglected to mention, that in the correspondence held with Lady Palliser, her ladyship's consent to the future union of her daughter with our hero was duly sought and obtained.

Indeed Lady Palliser considered, that Caroline's name had been so provokingly mixed up with that horrible business, as she always designated the late afflictions of the Arden family, that marrying her to the remaining

brother was now absolutely indispensable, as well as one which would prove an excellent practical explanation of the whole affair, and save her the trouble of saying an immensity about it, beside the risk of being neither understood nor believed. Now, too, that the title and estates were Alfred's, she had no very particular objection to him: that is to say, he was just as good now as his brother had been—though neither were matches such as Caroline might have expected, had she not made an egregious fool of herself. As to her ladyship's silly anger with our hero, for daring to admire her daughter more than herself, it had long since been forgotten amid myriads of more brilliant conquests.

Previously, however, to the return to England of our travelling party, Lady Palliser died after a very short illness, having taken cold at some royal fête, which, when already far from well, she had imprudently quitted her bed to attend.

This new mourning made it nearly two years after the death of poor Willoughby before the marriage of Caroline and Alfred was celebrated : that of Madeline with Mr. Cameron, who through all the troubles of the family had been faithful, took place as soon as the mourning for her brother was over.

Prior, however, to these events, and prior also to the return from abroad of the Arden family, Miss Fips, all her flyers and streamers of black

crape, nay, her very parasol black, reappeared upon the stage, calling herself Mrs. Arden, and declaring that she had been privately married to the late Geoffery Arden ; of which alleged fact, however, she failed to produce any satisfactory proof, save and except a son and heir, on whose behalf she claimed whatever property was left by the deceased.

This impudent and dishonest attempt of Miss Fips's not only failed in its object, but produced an effect as little expected as desired, either by herself or her father; eventually proving the cause of bringing to light circumstances and letters, sufficient to induce a strict examination into the nature of the services rendered by Mr. Fips to Geoffery Arden. While in the

course of the investigation thus brought about, it was clearly proved, that the said Mr. Fips had been one of the parties engaged in a foul and nefarious conspiracy against the life and property of Sir Alfred Arden.

When Fips saw how the matter was likely to end, he, by way of precaution against the heavy fine which constitutes a part of the punishment for conspiracy, made over, by a fraudulent, antedated settlement, his whole property to his daughter, with a secret understanding, that she was not to avail herself of the gift during his life. On the expiration of his period of imprisonment, however, he found that Miss Fips had possessed herself of every shilling, married, and gone abroad. He was now to make his election

between begging and going on the parish; for since his late misfortunes, the infirmities of age—a broken constitution, failing sight, and a trembling hand—had increased so rapidly upon him, that, to say nothing of want of character, he could not get employment even as a copying-clerk in any office. Of the two remaining alternatives, then, he was less ashamed to beg among strangers than to claim his right of parish at Arden, where he well knew the deserved abhorrence in which he was held. Thither, however, in the character of a vagrant, he was finally passed, without his own consent; and in the workhouse of Arden parish he died by his own hand, having been driven at last to cut his throat, in a paroxysm of despair and ineffectual

rage, brought on by the ceaseless revilings, reproaches, and scoffings of his companions; many of whom, but too justly, laid their ruin at the door of his dishonesty and ruthless oppression.

Caroline and Alfred, after the cloudy morning of their life cleared up, enjoyed sunshine to its close. But this we need have scarcely mentioned; for all the ladies will say, "Who could avoid being happy with Alfred?" while the gentlemen will, no doubt, be disposed to pay a similar compliment to Caroline.

Lady Darlingford made an excellent, respectable, and respectful wife. The first season she appeared in London after her marriage, Lord Nelthorpe, her early lover, who by this time

was separated from his lady, had the presumption to offer her some insidious compliments, indicative of continued admiration. They, however, as well as himself, were received with the scorn they merited.

Louisa and Henry Lyndsey soon began to experience the inconveniences of poverty; yet, when both happened to be in good humour, they could still think love better than riches. When, however, any thing ruffled the temper of either—and where there are difficulties (unless people are angels, or very good Christians), this will too often be the case—Louisa would think of, at least, if not regret, the sacrifices she had made; and Henry would recollect, with indignant resentment, that Louisa

would, in all probability, have jilted him, but for the decided step he had taken.

These sentiments, after being at first only thought, might at last have been expressed ; and so led, in time, to recrimination, and much unhappiness. Fortunately, however, an opportune act of liberality on the part of Alfred, by placing them in easy circumstances, before their dispositions became soured, prevented so miserable a result.

Madeline, it might be thought, had at least secured wealth. But in the course of years, she became a widow ; and having in early life married an old man for his money, when no longer young herself, she married a young one for love, who married her for her money, i.e.

being one of the unhappy younger brother species, and therefore without a shilling of his own. Having also a taste for extravagance, acquired in childhood under the parental roof, and, moreover, a fashionable passion for gambling, he soon contrived to run through her splendid settlement, and at length found a dwelling for himself within the rules of the King's Bench.

Aunt Dorothea, who, though getting very old (somewhere about eighty-five or eighty-six), was still living at home, gave her favourite niece a home at Rosefield Cottage, which finally she willed to her with what little property else she possessed ; but secured all in the hands of trustees, to preserve it from the extravagant husband.

Mr. Salter senior died, and Mr. Salter junior married; on which the Misses Salter found themselves constrained, by their limited circumstances, to betake themselves to a small lodgings, where, if we may be excused the twofold contradiction in terms, they lived together in *single blessedness* the remainder of their days, as *miserable* as bad tempers, aggravated by discomfort and disappointment, could make them. They seemed to have but one object in life, which was mutually to thwart each other, and as they could afford but one sleeping apartment (the single dressing-glass of which, by-the-by, was a constant bone of contention), and one sitting-room, each of the smallest possible dimensions—they had neither

in general persisting, notwithstanding a remonstrance or so from pug, on picking her steps in among his feet, and laying her back on his warm bosom ; thus wisely making herself as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

Why is man called, by way of distinction, *a rational animal?* Man, who, of all creatures in creation knows the least how to be happy, while happiness is the end and aim of all.

Oh, happiness ! our being's end and aim !
Good, pleasure, ease, content, whate'er thy name :
That something still which prompts th' eternal sigh,
For which we bear to live, or dare to die ;

* * * * *

Plant of celestial seed ! if dropp'd below,
Say in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow ?

* * * * *

Fix'd to no spot is happiness sincere ;
'Tis no where to be found, or every where.

Why, then, is happiness so rare ? Because
ere it can be possessed, every virtue must be
ours and we must be wise withal, gentle, pa-
tient, lowly, meek ; nor at the idle suggestions
of vanity, immolate life's realities on the imagi-
nary altars of *Pride*.

Know then this truth, enough for man to know,
Virtue, alone, is happiness below.

THE END.

